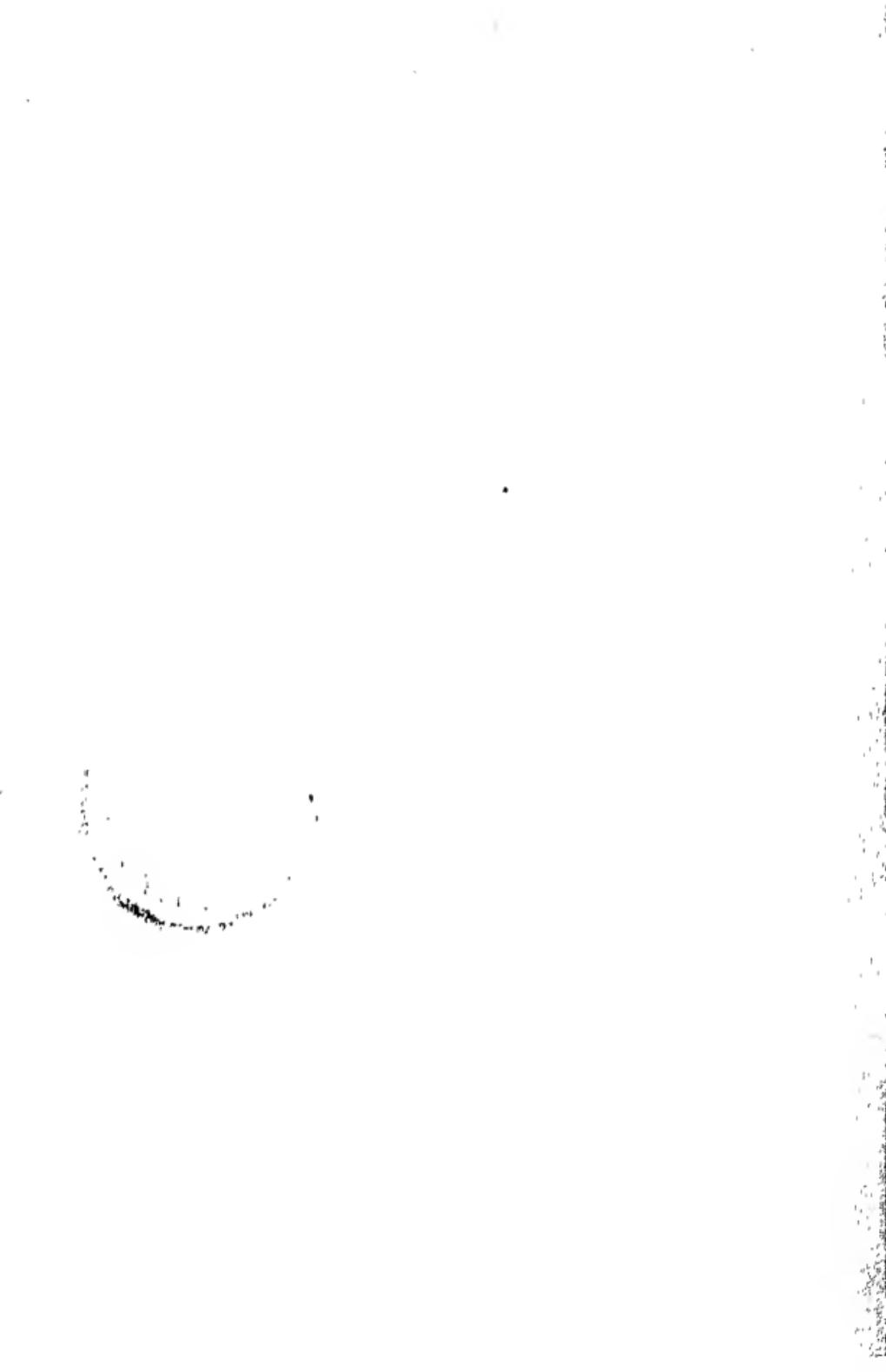


THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

EDITED BY J. L. CRANMER-BYNG, M.C.

AN ARAB PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY



An Arab Philosophy of History

*Selections from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldun
of Tunis (1332-1406)*

Translated and Arranged by

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editor of this series is a very definite one. He desires above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. He is confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

J. L. CRANMER-BYNG.

50, ALBEMARLE STREET,
LONDON, W.1.

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IBN KHALDUN

... 'Abd-ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami of Tunis (vivebat A.D. 1332-1406)—an Arabic genius who achieved in a single 'acquiescence' of less than four years' length, out of a fifty-four years' span of adult working life, a life-work in the shape of a piece of literature which can bear comparison with the work of Thucydides or the work of a Machiavelli for both breadth and profundity of vision as well as for sheer intellectual power. Ibn Khaldun's star shines the more brightly by contrast with the foil of darkness against which it flashes out; for while Thucydides and Machiavelli and Clarendon are all brilliant representatives of brilliant times and places, Ibn Khaldun is the sole point of light in his quarter of the firmament. He is indeed the one outstanding personality in the history of a civilization whose social life on the whole was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. In his chosen field of intellectual activity he appears to have been inspired by no predecessors, and to have found no kindred souls among his contemporaries, and to have kindled no answering spark of inspiration in any successors; and yet, in the *Prolegomena* (*Muquddamat*) to his *Universal History* he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place. It was his single brief 'acquiescence' from a life of practical activity that gave Ibn Khaldun his opportunity to cast his creative thought into literary shape.

A STUDY OF HISTORY. Vol. III. Arnold J. Toynbee.
Royal Institute of International Affairs and Oxford
University Press.

... Ibn Khaldun was a historian, politician, sociologist, economist, a deep student of human affairs, anxious to analyse the past of mankind in order to understand its present and its future. Not only is he the greatest historian of the Middle Ages, towering like a giant over a

tribe of pygmies, but one of the first philosophers of history, a forerunner of Machiavelli, Bodin, Vico, Comte and Curnot. Among Christian historians of the Middle Ages there are but one or two who can perhaps compare with him, to wit, Otto von Freising and John of Salisbury, and the distance between them and him is great indeed, far greater than the distance between him and Vico. What is equally remarkable, Ibn Khaldun ventured to speculate on what we should call to-day the methods of historical research. . . .

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE, *George Sarton. Baillière, Tindall and Cox.*

. . . As regards the science or philosophy of history, Arabic literature was adorned by one most brilliant name. Neither the classical nor the medieval Christian world can show one of nearly the same brightness. Ibn Khaldun (A.D. 1332-1406), considered simply as an historian, had superiors even among Arabic authors, but as a theorist on history he had no equal in any age or country until Vico appeared, more than three hundred years later. Plato, Aristotle and Augustine were not his peers, and all others were unworthy of being even mentioned along with him. He was admirable alike by his originality and sagacity, his profundity and his comprehensiveness. He was, however, a man apart, as solitary and unique among his co-religionists and contemporaries in the department of historical philosophy as was Dante in poetry or Roger Bacon in science among theirs. Arabic historians had, indeed, collected the materials which he could use, but he alone used them. . . .

HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY. *Robert Flint.*
Wm. Blackwood & Sons Ltd.

P R E F A C E

THE purpose of this volume is to introduce the Arab historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun to English-speaking readers by selecting from his *Prolegomena* passages chosen and grouped so as to present his views on such subjects as : History, Geography, Economics, Sociology, Politics, Education, Metaphysics, and so on.

The present work is intended not primarily for the specialized Arabic scholar, but rather for the student of Political, Economic and Sociological doctrines, as well as for those who are interested in the Arab world and who wish to learn something of its intellectual background. Hence, while accuracy has never been deliberately sacrificed, an attempt has been made to present Ibn Khaldun's thought in a style and terminology familiar to students of the social sciences and to avoid a literal translation which might obscure the depth and originality—one might almost say the modernity—of his theories.

It is hardly necessary to add that no selection can meet the very real need for a translation of the whole *Prolegomena*. Such a translation must, however, await the establishment of a reliable text. As the late Nathaniel Schmidt¹ put it :

Only with a more adequate critical apparatus than has hitherto been available can an edition of the Arabic text be construed that shall in all respects meet scientific demands ; and only from such a text should that complete translation into some western language be made which is so urgently demanded in view of the growing importance attached by students of history, philosophy, sociology, economics, and pedagogy to the ideas of the greatest of Arab historians.

¹ "The Manuscripts of Ibn Khaldun", *American Oriental Society Journal*, vol. 46 (1926).

In view of the great difficulties involved, however, such a task is not likely to be undertaken for many years. In the meantime, one may hope that a selection will help to stimulate interest in a much-neglected thinker and thus spur on some scholar to carry out the more important work of textual criticism and translation.

The selections have been grouped according to subject matter, to facilitate comparison with corresponding topics in contemporary social sciences. The order chosen is different from that given by Ibn Khaldun; the main outlines of the Arabic original can be judged from the opening selection in the present volume.

Generally speaking, Ibn Khaldun's meaning can be readily grasped and rendered into a foreign language, but the available texts are corrupt and there are many occasions when I have had to choose between more than one possible interpretation. More particularly, Ibn Khaldun's use of pronouns often lacks precision while some of his terms carry different meanings in different contexts. Hence, while attempting wherever possible to indicate clearly the antecedent of the pronoun, I have occasionally deliberately left the sentence ambiguous rather than force upon it an unwarranted interpretation and have translated certain words differently in different places. At the same time, certain passages have a more definite meaning in the translation than in the original.

All headings and subheadings printed in capital letters have been inserted by me. Ibn Khaldun's own chapter headings have been retained only when they are immediately related to the subject matter of the passage which follows. These headings are printed in Italics.

References are to Quatremère's edition which, though imperfect, is the best available. The text has been checked

against that of the Beirut-Cairo edition and a few minor emendations have been indicated in footnotes. Other footnotes have been reduced to a minimum, being inserted only when it was necessary to identify a proper name or explain an allusion to something unfamiliar to Western readers. All other passages or words added by me have been inserted in square brackets.

I have not attempted an exact system of transliteration, in order to avoid unnecessary costs in printing diacritical marks. Of the distinctively Arabic letters only the following have been shown : "th" (tha), "kh" (kha), "dh" (dhal), "‘" (ain), "gh" (ghain), "q" (qaf).

Wherever possible, the Europeanized form of a name has been given ; for example, Cairo rather than Al Qahira, Koran rather than Al Qur'an, Omar rather than 'Umar, etc.

In conclusion, I must thank the many friends and colleagues who helped me in preparing this book : Professors Anis al Makdisi of the American University, Beirut, and Nabih A. Faris of Princeton, and Ilse Lichtenstadter of the Asia Institute, New York, for their aid in interpreting certain difficult passages in the original ; Professors R. H. Soltau of Aberystwyth and Stuart C. Dodd of Seattle, Washington, for their advice regarding the grouping and presentation ; Mrs. G. B. Stewart and Robert D. Sethian for reading the English manuscript and making many suggestions which removed ambiguities and improved the style ; and Miss Ellen Badre for typing the manuscript. Naturally, none of these persons is responsible for any errors I may have made.

But above all, my thanks are due to my wife, whose help at every stage was invaluable and but for whom this book would have been even more imperfect than it is. To her it is affectionately dedicated.

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BEIRUT.

INTRODUCTION

IBN KHALDUN's claim on our attention rests on firm ground, for his *Prolegomena* represents the most comprehensive synthesis in the Human Sciences ever achieved by the Arabs, and gives the modern non-specialist reader an accurate and vivid picture of the range of knowledge available to the medieval Muslim world. Other Muslim thinkers, notably Ibn Sina¹ (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd² (Averroes), and Al Ghazzali,³ had a much deeper insight into metaphysical and religious problems, and their influence over Europe was immense ; but Ibn Khaldun, while profiting from their philosophical speculations, greatly surpassed them in his understanding of social problems.

¹ Ibn Sina (980-1037), known to the West as Avicenna, was born near Bokhara, in Central Asia. An amazingly precocious youth, from the age of 16 onward he served as physician to several rulers in Persia. His *Canon of Medicine* established him as the leading medical authority in Islam, and found its way into most European universities. He developed and systematized Al Farabi's syncretic philosophy.

² Ibn Rushd (1126-98), famous in medieval Europe as Averroes, was the last of the great Muslim philosophers. Born in Cordoba, he served as court physician and judge in Spain and Morocco. Most of his works have perished ; some survived in the Hebrew or Latin translations, which spread Averroism throughout the universities of Europe. Ibn Rushd carries further than most of the Muslim philosophers the bold use of reason, even where that leads to conclusions which seem to contradict the teachings of religion.

³ Ghazzali (1058-1111), known to medieval Europe as Algazel, has often been compared to Thomas Aquinas and his monumental *Ihya 'ulum al din* to the *Summa Theologica*. Combining the critical intellect of a philosopher with the spiritual awareness of a mystic, he made noteworthy contributions to both metaphysics and theology. His autobiography has been translated into several languages, including English.

Indeed, it is not too much to say that Ibn Khaldun is the greatest figure in the Social Sciences between the time of Aristotle and that of Machiavelli and as such deserves the attention of every one who is interested in these sciences. More than any of his contemporaries, whether European or Arab, he tackles the kind of problem which preoccupies us to-day : the nature of society ; the influence of climate and occupation on the character of groups ; the best educational methods, etc. Moreover, his positive outlook and matter-of-fact style render him particularly congenial to the modern mind, brought up on a tradition of scientific method.

LIFE

Abu Zaid 'Abdel Rahman Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in 1332. His family claimed to originate from Hadramaut, the relatively fertile agricultural region of south Arabia, and to have come over to Spain in the early days of the Islamic conquest.

What is certain is that the Ibn Khaldun family was established in Seville and played a leading part in the civil wars of the ninth century. During the next four centuries members of that family occupied leading positions in the administration and in the army, under the successive Omayyad, Al Murabitun (Almoravide), and Al Muwahhidun (Almohade) dynasties. When, in the thirteenth century, Seville constituted itself into a patrician republic, the Ibn Khalduns were among its ruling families.

But the Christian reconquest of Spain was driving many Muslims across the Straits of Gibraltar to Africa, and in 1248, just before the capture of Seville by Ferdinand III of Leon and Castille, the Ibn Khalduns judged it prudent to move over to Ceuta.

The refugees from Spain were on a much higher cultural

level than the inhabitants of North Africa, and our historian's grandfather soon obtained the post of Minister of Finance in Tunis. His son also distinguished himself as an administrator and soldier, but soon abandoned his career and devoted himself to the study of law, theology, and letters, until in 1349 he succumbed to the Black Death. 'Abdel Rahman received the education usually given to young men of his rank. First he was made to learn the Koran by heart, carefully memorizing the different accepted variations in the intonation of certain passages. That completed, he studied grammar and poetry, from which he passed on to jurisprudence. He made his entry into public life at the age of twenty, becoming secretary to the Sultan of Fez, in Morocco.

There have been few periods in history as agitated, not to say chaotic, as the thirteenth century in North Africa after the collapse of the Al Muwahhidun dynasty. Innumerable kinglets, princelets, and feudal lords struggled for supremacy ; towns changed masters with astonishing rapidity ; intrigue, murder, and revolts were rife. Survival was as much a question of luck as ability and Ibn Khaldun was fortunate to get off with only two years' imprisonment when he lost the Sultan's favour. His brother was less fortunate, being eventually assassinated by order of the prince of Tlemcen (Tilmisan).

In 1362, Ibn Khaldun went over to Spain, where he entered the service of the king of Granada, who sent him on an embassy to Pedro the Cruel, king of Castille. In Seville, where he saw "the monuments of the power of my ancestors", his ability evidently impressed the Christian king, who offered to take him into his service and restore to him the ancestral estates, an offer which he declined. He willingly accepted, however, the fief granted to him by the Sultan of Granada and brought over his family from Africa.

But here, too, his fortune did not last. Suspecting that he had aroused the jealousy of the Prime Minister, he took his leave of Spain and crossed the straits back to Africa. Soon after that he was appointed Chamberlain (i.e. Prime Minister) by the Sultan of Bougie in Algeria, and led some punitive expeditions against Berber tribes.

It would be tedious to follow in detail Ibn Khaldun's career during the next few years. Plots and counter-plots succeeded each other rapidly, and more than once Ibn Khaldun changed employer, allegiance, and residence, travelling as far as Morocco and Spain, living with the beduin tribes of Algeria and leading several military expeditions.

The next important date in his life is 1375, when he retired, with his family, to the castle of Qal'at Ibn Salama, near Oran, and, for four whole years, worked on his *Prolegomena* and *Universal History*. At the end of that period his need for documents, and one may suspect his craving for a more active life, led him back to Tunis. Here he continued to study and delivered a course of lectures, which were sufficiently successful to arouse the jealousy of both scholars and courtiers. Ibn Khaldun therefore decided to go to Mecca on a pilgrimage and in 1382 took a ship for Alexandria.

The impression caused by Cairo on the Tunisian's mind was profound. After describing at length the wonders and riches of that place, he quotes with approval the statement of one of his former teachers that "What one sees in dreams surpasses reality, but all that one could dream of Cairo falls short of the truth". Hence we can suppose that it was without much reluctance that he accepted the lectureship, and later the post of Chief Justice, which the Mameluke Sultan of Egypt offered him.

As Chief Justice of the Malikite rite, Ibn Khaldun undertook the formidable task of sweeping away corruption and ineffi-

ency from the law courts. Needless to say, this brought him up against many vested interests and aroused against him a host of enemies. A commission was set up to enquire into his tenure of office, but no charge against him could be substantiated. Nevertheless, the agitation against him continued, and while the rulers were evidently beginning to wonder whether it was worth their while to keep that unpopular judge, the wrecking of the ship which was carrying his family from Tunis to Egypt deprived him at one blow of "riches, happiness, and children". He sought consolation in prayer and was very much relieved when the Sultan asked him to resign from his post. Three years later, in 1387, he pursued his interrupted pilgrimage, after which he returned to Egypt, intending to lead a quiet life.

But fate reserved for him one more encounter, the most dramatic of all. In 1400 the Mameluke Sultan took him, along with other judges and jurists, to Damascus, which was threatened by Timur Lenk's armies. When, shortly after, the Mameluke armies withdrew to Egypt, Ibn Khaldun was one of the notables who were let down by long ropes over the walls of the city to negotiate terms with Timur Lenk. The Tatar conqueror was struck with the historian's appearance and greatly impressed when Ibn Khaldun read him the passages concerning him in the *Universal History*, asking him to correct any mistakes that might have slipped into the chronicle! According to one source, he offered Ibn Khaldun a post in his service, an offer which the latter skilfully declined. When the Tatars sacked Damascus, Ibn Khaldun was able to save the lives of some of its notables.

On his return to Egypt, Ibn Khaldun was once more appointed Chief Justice, a post which he still occupied when, in 1406, death overtook him at the age of seventy-four. He was buried in Cairo, in the Sufi cemetery outside Bab el Nasr.¹

¹ 'Inan, M. A. : *Ibn Khaldun*, Lahore, 1941.

His agitated life had brought him in touch with Pedro the Cruel in the West and Timur the Lame in the East. It had taken him into the huts of savages and into the palaces of kings, into the dungeons with criminals and into the highest courts of justice; into the companionship of the illiterate and into the academies of scholars; into the treasure houses of the past and into the activities of the present; into deprivation and sorrow and into affluence and joy. It had led him into the depths where the spirit broods over the meaning of life.¹

It is unnecessary, and indeed impossible, in view of the lack of material, to attempt an evaluation of Ibn Khaldun's character, but there is one charge from which he must be absolved. His constant intrigues and changes of allegiance have led certain scholars to accuse him of a lack of patriotism. But, as has been rightly pointed out, patriotism in the current sense of the word was as unknown to medieval Islam as to medieval Christendom, and Ibn Khaldun could leave the service of one kinglet and enter that of another with no more qualms than his contemporary, the chronicler Froissart. To one fatherland Ibn Khaldun always remained true, Dar el Islam, or the area of Muslim civilization.

HISTORY AND SOCIOLOGY

Ibn Khaldun's major work is his massive *Universal History*. His fame, however, rests not on the narrative parts which although constituting the principal source on the history of North Africa,² do not greatly surpass the level attained by medieval

¹ Nathaniel Schmidt: *Ibn Khaldun*, New York, 1930.

² "But for the historical work of Ibn Khaldun, we should still be ignorant of the course of the history of North Africa, from the Muslim conquest to the 14th century"—Gaston Bouthoul: *Ibn Khaldoun*, Paris, 1930, page 1.

Similarly, Dozy praises highly Ibn Khaldun's work on the history of Spain.

Christian and Muslim chroniclers, but on the *Prolegomena* to that history. In these he studies the nature and development of society, with a view to providing the historian with a criterion by which he can judge recorded events and changes. "The past resembles the future as water resembles water," says he, and hence Sociology, the study of the present, casts light on History, the study of the past, just as History supplies the materials for Sociology. Sociology he defines as the study of human society in its different forms, the nature and characteristics of each of these forms, and the laws governing its development. It is not too much to claim, with Sati' Bey el Husry,¹ that in Book I of the *Prolegomena*, Ibn Khaldun sketches a general Sociology ; in Books II and III, a Sociology of Politics ; in Book IV, a Sociology of Urban Life ; in Book V, a Sociology of Economics, and in Book VI, a Sociology of Knowledge.

Indeed, it may be maintained that Ibn Khaldun was the first to state clearly and to apply some of the basic principles on which sociology must rest, namely :

First, that social phenomena seem to obey laws which, while not as absolute as those governing natural phenomena, are sufficiently constant to cause social events to follow regular, well-defined patterns and sequences. Hence a grasp of these laws enables the sociologist to understand the trend of events around him.

Secondly, that these laws operate on masses and cannot be significantly influenced by isolated individuals.² Thus, to quote

¹ *Dirasat 'an Muqadimat Ibn Khaldun*, 2 volumes, Beirut, 1943.

² Bouthoul, *op. cit.*, page 27, rightly points out that the individual plays a negligible part in Ibn Khaldun's philosophy, since the individual's tastes and beliefs are conditioned by his environment and education and since the "great men" of history have a very minor influence on the course of events.

an example given by Ibn Khaldun, the attempts of a reformer to rejuvenate a corrupt state meet with hardly any success, because the individual's efforts are submerged by the overwhelmingly powerful trend of social forces.

Thirdly, that these laws can be discovered only by gathering a large number of facts and observing concomitances and sequences ; and, broadly speaking, these facts can be gathered from either, or both, of two sources : records of past events and observation of present events. Explanation then consists in relating the correlations thus observed to accepted principles of psychology (individual and group), biology, etc.

Fourthly, that much the same set of social laws operates in societies with the same kind of structure, however much these societies may be separated by space or time. Thus Ibn Khaldun is always careful to point out that the remarks he makes about nomads apply equally well to Arab beduins (Pre-Islamic and contemporary), Berbers, Turkomen, and Kurds.

Fifthly, that societies are not static, that is to say that social forms change and evolve. The only factor which Ibn Khaldun mentions specifically as making for change is the contact between different peoples or classes, and the consequent imitations and intermixtures. This limitation to only one factor is undoubtedly a weakness in his system ; but it is already much to have recognized historical evolution and to have stated explicitly that tendencies which are observable in one stage of development do not necessarily exist in the subsequent stages. In the following selections two examples of this are given : his remarks that figures of population, wealth, etc., which seem quite fantastic in ages of decadence can be shown to have been true of ages of prosperity ; and his observation on the changed status of a social class (in this case that of teachers) as a result of social changes.

Lastly, that these laws are sociological and not a mere reflection of biological impulses, or physical factors. Ibn Khaldun sees this point clearly, and although he allows the environmental factors, such as climate and food, their due share, he attributes a much greater influence to such purely social factors as cohesion, occupation, wealth, etc. Thus when discussing the national characteristics of such peoples as the Arabs or Jews, he is very careful to stress that such features as, for example, the insubordination of the Arab beduin or the cunning of the Jew are to be explained not by their racial origins but by their mode of life and their past history.

But Ibn Khaldun did not only lay foundations on which the science of sociology must rest: he also used many of the methods and brought to light many of the factors which form the working tools of modern sociologists. Thus, in a remarkable passage he points out that a subjugated people tends to imitate the customs and institutions of its victors partly out of blind reverence, partly because of a psychological reluctance to admit that its defeat was due to a lower morale, and a preference for attributing the other side's victory to superior techniques, weapons or institutions; and lastly, because of the belief that the secret of the victors' success is to be found in some particular habit or institution of theirs which, if imitated, will ensure an equal measure of success for others.

No one who has studied the successive waves of Gallomania, Anglomania, Germanomania, Russomania, and Americomania which have swept over the world, and the successive beliefs that the source of England's strength was to be found in a hereditary aristocracy, or in free trade, or that the source of Russia's strength lay in Socialism or in a one-party totalitarian dictatorship, which, if imitated, would equally strengthen other peoples—no one who has studied such waves and beliefs can

doubt the insight of Ibn Khaldun into the part played by imitation in social affairs.

More detailed analysis would bring out still further points where Ibn Khaldun anticipated modern sociologists ; for example, his use of such mechanistic concepts as the balance of forces or the radiation of energy, or of such biological concepts as decay and growth, to explain social phenomena ; or his understanding of social morphology and of the action of economic factors on society.

The core of Ibn Khaldun's general and political Sociology is his concept of 'asabia,¹ or Social Solidarity. Society is natural and necessary, since the isolated individual could neither defend himself against the more powerful beasts nor provide for his economic wants. But individual aggressiveness would make social life impossible unless curbed by some sanction. This sanction may be provided by a powerful individual's imposing his will on the rest—in this Ibn Khaldun anticipates Hobbes—or—and here he shows deeper insight than Hobbes—it may be provided by Social Solidarity. The need for a common authority generates the State, which is to Society as Form is to Matter, and as inseparable from it. Ibn Khaldun traces the origin of this Solidarity to the blood ties uniting the smaller societies, but is careful to point out that blood ties mean nothing unless accompanied by proximity and a common life, and that living together may generate as powerful a solidarity as kinship. Moreover, the relations between allies, between clients and patrons,

¹T. Khemiri : "Der Asabija—Begriff in der Muqadimma des Ibn Haldun" (*Der Islam*, Berlin, 1936). After a detailed discussion of the roots of the word "asabia" and of the translations given by De Slane, De Sacy, Gabrieli, Ayad and Kraus, Khemiri concludes that in general it "signifies Nationalism in the broadest sense". The words "social solidarity" have been preferred as of wider application and more appropriate to the tribal societies which Ibn Khaldun had primarily in mind.

and between slaves and masters, may all lead eventually to a wider solidarity.

Social Solidarity is strongest in tribal society, because of the peculiar mode of living of nomads and their constant need for mutual aid. Moreover, the poverty of their deserts means that "nothing ties them to the land of their birth, so that all countries seem equally good to them". This together with the manlier, more upright and more self-reliant character of tribesmen, accounts for the numerous conquests of large and apparently powerful empires by smaller but more cohesive tribes. A state can be founded only by strife, and in conflicts victory goes to the more compact and cohesive side, although of course numbers play their part, as Ibn Khaldun fully realizes. A new religion, too, can establish itself only by strife, and will succeed only if it enlists the help of a powerful social solidarity. But a religion once established can greatly reinforce social solidarity, even to the extent of replacing the primitive tribal solidarity, by grouping men's wills and emotions around a common purpose. In fact, religion is the most powerful cement that can hold together a large sedentary people.¹ The combination of religious and tribal solidarity is formidable, and to it Ibn Khaldun attributes the rapid and sweeping conquests of the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century.

But if tribal solidarity can found empires, it can also check them. Ibn Khaldun contrasts the easy task of ruling such sedentary nations as Egypt with the difficulties encountered in

¹ "He avers more than once in unequivocal terms (strikingly reminiscent of Machiavelli) the absolute necessity of religion for a really united and effective state. But it is the State he has in mind, not the revealed truth of Islam."—E. Rosenthal : "Ibn Khaldun, a North African Muslim Thinker of the Fourteenth Century", *John Rylands Library, Manchester, Bulletin*, 1940.

Morocco, owing to the existence of numerous tribes, or the struggle of the Israelites to subjugate the tribes of Palestine. More generally, he gives it as a law that the extent of an empire will vary directly as the strength of the original solidarity which created it and inversely as the strength of the solidarities it encounters.

A state can arise only on some original solidarity. Once established, however, its need for solidarity decreases, as custom and the spectacle of unquestioned and unbroken authority will secure the necessary acquiescence and obedience on the part of the subjects.

But the state, like any other institution, is subject to the laws of change and decay. Created by tribal solidarity, the state is characterized in its early stages by a sense of cohesiveness and comradeship which enables the people to participate in the government and to share power with the ruler. But with the passage of time, and owing to the disintegrating effects of sedentary and luxurious modes of living, the ruler seeks to make his power absolute. "The natural end of solidarity is sovereignty." To achieve this the ruler must create a new class of Clients personally attached to himself, and substitute mercenary soldiers for his primitive comrades in arms and counsel. The next stage is characterized by great pomp and luxury, by increasing concentration of power in the hands of the ruler, and by a growing estrangement between ruler and subjects, which further weakens the primitive sense of solidarity. At the same time the growing luxury leads, in an economy which is not expanding, to financial embarrassment: taxes are increased and the pay of the soldiers and officials becomes overdue. At this stage the state is ready for a change of masters and, as candidates are never lacking, soon falls a prey to internal or external aggression.

Is there, then, no way of staving off the hour of doom? Ibn Khaldun admits one possibility: a thorough reform of the

fundamental laws and institutions of the state may give it a new lease of life. But the doom, though postponed, cannot be indefinitely averted: "It is the law of God for his creation, which changes not." More precisely, since mankind refuses to follow the Divine Law revealed to it by God, preferring to indulge in the sins of pride, luxury and greed, it is "condemned to an empty and unending cycle of rise and fall, conditioned by the 'natural' and inevitable consequences of the predominance of its animal instincts".¹

One further point remains to be mentioned: Ibn Khaldun's objective, descriptive, treatment of the subject. Like Spinoza, he seeks neither to praise nor to blame, but to know; to grasp the laws that govern the development of human institutions, not to pass value judgements on these institutions.

Occasionally the reader has glimpses of Ibn Khaldun's likes and dislikes: thus he condemns slavery as degrading, opposes the claims of a hereditary nobility, and is clearly not taken in by the glamour of war; above all, while admitting their manliness and love of liberty, he shows his dislike of the roving, predatory nomads who wrecked the civilization of North Africa, leaving nothing but the ruins of what were once flourishing cities and imposing monuments. But even here his impartiality remains. Although regarding himself as an Arab, and eager to trace his descent to pre-Islamic times, he is no kinder to Arab beduins than to Berber, Kurdish, or Turkish nomads.²

¹ H. A. R. Gibb, "The Islamic Background of Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, 1933-5.

² The use of the word "Arab" by Ibn Khaldun has given rise to much confusion. It is clear that in most places it denotes only the beduins, just as it did in the Koran and does to-day in parts of Egypt and Syria, and not all those of Arab descent. In a few places, however, it refers to Arabs more generally, *precisely because* of their proximity to nomadic life.

It is his views on Society and State, as well as his firm grasp of the presence of causality and necessity in social as well as in physical matters, and his notion of historical evolution, that have earned Ibn Khaldun the praise of Western historians. Thus Professor Toynbee¹ writes :

He has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place ;

while Robert Flint² stated that

As regards the science of philosophy of history, Arab literature was adorned by one most brilliant name. Neither the classical nor the medieval Christian world can show one of nearly the same brightness. . . . Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine were not his peers, and all others were unworthy of being even mentioned along with him.

ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Other aspects of Ibn Khaldun's work are also, however, of great interest, notably his Metaphysics, Geography, Economics, and Pedagogy. His theory of Being is that of a continuous gradation starting with matter and rising through plants, animals and men to angels, a view common to both Muslim and Christian scholastics, and ultimately derived by them from the Greeks. But Ibn Khaldun strikes a more modern note than the scholastics by stating that each of these kinds of created beings is ready to transform itself into the kind immediately above or below it.

His Theory of Knowledge shows him to be an Empiricist and Positivist : all knowledge is derived through the senses, hence the claim of the philosophers to discourse on such matters as Substances and their Causes is unfounded. But, like Kant, he excludes Philosophy only to make room for Faith. What

¹ *A Study of History*, Vol. III, p. 322.

² *History of Philosophy of History*, p. 86.

Reason cannot attain may be reached through Mysticism and Revelation, to a description of which Ibn Khaldun devotes some of the noblest and warmest passages in his book.¹

GEOGRAPHY

Ibn Khaldun's geographical knowledge is not in advance of that of his Muslim contemporaries, though distinctly superior to that of medieval Europe. Indeed, he does not always seem to have profited from the knowledge accumulated by Muslim astronomers and travellers. Nevertheless, the extracts given below show a clear understanding of the shape and approximate size of the earth and a keen insight into the influence of Geography on the character of groups. He deserves special praise for realizing that most group characteristics are traceable, not to inherent racial differences, but, directly or indirectly, to such environmental factors as climate, food, and, above all, occupation.

ECONOMICS

Economic Theory has made such rapid progress during the last hundred and fifty years that earlier writers on the subject rarely provide more than historical interest. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldun's remarks on economic theory deserve attention. Unlike contemporary Christian scholastics, he conceived of Economics as standing independently of Ethics, being concerned with a positive description of phenomena and an apprehension of the laws governing them, rather than an appraisal of their moral value. Unlike some Mercantilists, he realizes that production, rather than trade, is the source of wealth. He realizes, too, that gold and silver, far from constituting wealth, as was

¹ For an account of Ibn Khaldun's views on Mysticism and their relation to his sociological study of religion, see Miya Syrier, "Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Mysticism" in *Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad, July 1947.

so widely believed in Europe and elsewhere until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are mere metals, like iron, prized because the relative stability of their price makes of them good media of exchange and stores of value. Before Locke and Hume, he sees that each country gets the gold it needs through foreign trade and that gold-producing countries are not necessarily the wealthiest.

Even his theory of value is not devoid of interest. He understands, though not very clearly, the influence of supply and demand factors on prices, including wages ; he states that the value of a commodity is mainly derived from the labour embodied in it ; he realizes that prices are interdependent, so that a rise or fall in the price of one commodity tends to communicate itself to others. He believes in free competition and strongly condemns monopoly. He clearly understands the function of trade and declares it and most other services, such as medicine, teaching, and even singing, as productive, in this showing himself more clear sighted than Adam Smith. He even goes as far as to say that as civilization progresses the relative importance of agriculture declines, while that of services increases.

But if Ibn Khaldun's views on "pure economics" fully earn him the title of "Pioneer Economist",¹ his views on "Social Economics" are even more advanced. More clearly than many modern economists he saw the interrelation of political, social, economic and demographic factors.

As a scholar put it :

But more significant in the undoubtedly new and correct perception of the causal interdependence of economy, finance and political power. . . . He perceived that the economic sphere cannot without serious consequences for the machinery of society be looked upon as segregated

¹ See M. A. Nashaat, "Ibn Khaldun, Pioneer Economist", *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, May 1944.

from finance, army, spiritual culture. They are all interconnected, and only if they are in perfect equilibrium on the basis of a mutual give and take is the State at its best and functions normally and effectively.¹

Before Durkheim, Ibn Khaldun hinted that division of labour reinforces social solidarity. Like Marx, he understood the enormous influence exerted by economic factors on political and social life, going as far as to say : "The difference between different peoples arises out of the differences in their occupations." Few sociologists have seen more clearly the influence exerted by an occupation on the character of those pursuing it. Even his views on Public Finance remind one of those of contemporary advocates of state expenditure designed to promote economic activity.

EDUCATION

Ibn Khaldun's Psychology of Education is built on the notion of aptitude or skill (Malakat). Every action or thought necessarily leaves its imprint on the mind of the agent ; hence a prolonged repetition of the same action tends to give the agent a certain skill, or aptitude, for that particular action. The nearer the mind is to its natural, raw state, the easier it is to imprint on it a given skill or aptitude. Generally speaking, says Ibn Khaldun, the fact of acquiring a given skill indisposes the mind against acquiring another, different one ; thus, it is rare to find a skilled tailor who is also a skilled carpenter or mason ; or to master a foreign language after one's own. But on the other hand, Ibn Khaldun does see that the mere fact of acquiring a skill sharpens the mind and gives it certain habits of orderly thinking which can help it when it turns to a completely different subject.

But Ibn Khaldun would not have been true to his sociological method if he had regarded knowledge as a purely individual

¹ E. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*

affair and had neglected the social factors affecting it. And as a matter of fact he stresses those factors very heavily, just as he stresses the intimate connections between knowledge and the crafts, both of which spring from the same types of skills and aptitudes. Just as those crafts which minister to man's desire for luxury can arise only after his necessities have been met, so learning arises only at the higher stages of social development. Like other crafts, learning only develops in response to a demand on the part of society ; like them, it flourishes best in an urban environment with an unbroken tradition and practice going back over many generations.

As regards the contents of education, Ibn Khaldun seems to accept the ordinary curriculum of the medieval schools, with special stress, however, on Arithmetic and Geometry in the primary and secondary stages of education. It is rather interesting, however, to find him stating that the only use of Philosophy is "to sharpen the mind", a statement with which many modern philosophers would heartily concur. It is also interesting to find him deplored the excessive time wasted on such subjects as Grammar, Logic and Arithmetic which ought to be studied not for their own sakes but as a means to the understanding of Law, Theology and Physics.

But if his views on the contents of education are commonplace, his views on the methods to be employed are always penetrating and often profound. He sees the importance of gradualness and constant repetition ; of proceeding from the simple to the complex ; of surveying the field rapidly before attempting to master its details thoroughly ; of not stopping before every obstacle, but rather sweeping past it and returning to it later, in the light of wider knowledge. He sees the importance of studying the pupil's aptitudes ; of giving him concrete examples wherever possible ; of not using undue severity with

pupils. But it is perhaps his remarks on the learning of languages (he has classical Arabic in mind, but what he says can be applied equally well to other living or dead languages) that deserve attention. No one has grasped more clearly the difference between learning rules of Grammar and acquiring, by practice, reading, and the memorizing of passages, a mastery of a language.

HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF THOUGHT

Ibn Khaldun's star [says Toynbee¹] shines the more brightly by contrast with the foil of darkness against which it flashes out ; for while Thucydides and Machiavelli and Clarendon are all brilliant representatives of brilliant times and places, Ibn Khaldun is the sole point of light in his quarter of the firmament.

The sources of Ibn Khaldun's doctrines and the influences that moulded his thinking have not yet been explored. They may be divided into the following groups, for the sake of convenience :

Muslim historians, such as Al Tabari, Al Mas'udi, Al Waqidi and others whom Ibn Khaldun quotes abundantly. But these historians rarely rise above the level of chroniclers and it is not likely that Ibn Khaldun could have derived from them his systematic approach and his search for universal laws and tendencies governing social phenomena.

The same may be said of the second group, that of the Muslim *political thinkers*, such as Al Turtushi, Ibn Al Muqaffa' and Al Mawardi, who are also quoted by Ibn Khaldun as having attempted to study the laws of social development.²

¹ *Op. cit.*

² "Political thought there has always been in Islam, but it either started from the Sharia, and the problem was how to harmonize the existing State with the explicit regulations of the Sharia, or it started from Plato and tried to harmonize the actual State with the ideal State of perfect reason, losing itself in speculation. Moreover, in the minds of most

The only other possible influence is that of *the Greeks*. The Greek historians, such as Thucydides, were unknown to the Muslim thinkers. Plato's *Republic* had been translated into Arabic and had a considerable influence on all Arabic Metaphysics ; it formed the model of Al Farabi's ideal state, depicted in *Al Madinat al Fadila*.¹ Aristotle's *Politics*, on the other hand, does not seem to have been put into Arabic, though there probably was a Syriac version. Ibn Khaldun does indeed quote a long anecdote from "the treatise on politics attributed to Aristotle", but the anecdote in question is not to be found in any of Aristotle's works, nor is it at all Aristotelian in form or spirit, and if it be a representative sample of the "treatise on politics", Ibn Khaldun is fully justified in his criticism that "the observations are not fully developed nor backed by sufficient proofs and are moreover mixed up with other subjects". The treatise in question must have been one of the apocryphal works erroneously attributed to Aristotle. Whether Ibn Khaldun ever read the *Republic* is not known, but it would seem unlikely that he should have done so without quoting it a single time in his work.²

Muslim thinkers both trends of thought interacted upon each other. Ibn Khaldun, however, for the first time started from a hitherto unknown quantity : the human society. His problem was : how did society, as the aggregate of individuals, form itself into a political organization, and how did it develop . . . ? E. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*

¹ Al Farabi (died 950) was born in Transoxania, studied in Baghdad and spent the remaining part of his life in Aleppo. His commentaries on Aristotle gained him the title of "The Second Master", while his original works, including one modelled on Plato's *Republic*, may be said to have laid the foundations of Muslim syncretic neo-Platonism. He is also the author of a valuable treatise on music.

² The preceding statements should be compared with the following judgement of a distinguished scholar, Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, in his *Medieval Islam* (Chicago, 1946, page 399, footnote 39) :

"Ibn Khaldun's sociological studies, antedating modern European

Of course it is possible that Ibn Khaldun was influenced by some Spanish work which was later destroyed either by the Muslims or by the Inquisition.¹ But until such an influence can be traced, it is safer to assume that Ibn Khaldun reached his conclusions by an independent process of study and meditation on the events he saw around him or read of in the chronicles.

sociology by more than four centuries, came too late to arouse any response in his own civilization. The influence of milieu on thought was realized before him by As Sakkaki . . . but Ibn Khaldun's pioneering work took him far beyond his predecessor.

"It has been overlooked so far that the basic problems that occupied Ibn Khaldun's attention were studied by at least one Muslim author more than four centuries before his time. Mas'udi, *Tanbih*, pp. 3-4, avers having discussed in earlier works of his not only the various systems of government, but specifically the support lent by religion, *din*., to royal power, *mulk*, and vice versa, and the causes of political and religious decline. In another passage of the same book (p. 84) Mas'udi notes the dependence of a nation's laws on these four factors : its religion, its economy, its innate character, and the influence of neighbouring peoples. Unfortunately we do not know Mas'udi's solutions. Nor do we know if Ibn Khaldun was acquainted with Mas'udi's studies. The evidence available at present does not allow any inference as to Mas'udi's sources. But his reference, *Tanbih*, p. 78, to Aristotle's *Politeia*, may have some significance in this connection, at least so far as the discussion of the forms of government is concerned."

¹ E. F. Gautier, *op. cit.*, p. 96, puts forward the following tentative suggestion regarding Ibn Khaldun's "rationalism" :

"Should we admit that, through a crack in the watertight dividing wall, perhaps by the roundabout way of Andalusia, a whiff of our Western Renaissance reached the Oriental soul of Ibn Khaldun ?"

M. Gautier does not adduce any evidence in support of this hypothesis and the probability of a Western influence on Ibn Khaldun is so slight as to be negligible. For, in the middle of the fourteenth century, Western rationalism was in its infancy and there are no signs that any interest in Western thought was taken by either Ibn Khaldun or any of his Muslim contemporaries.

This hypothesis is the more plausible in view of the relative simplicity of social changes in Muslim history, especially in North Africa, and the frequent recurrence of the same pattern or cycle, all of which made it easier for a keen mind to generalize from the accumulated data and set up a comprehensive and harmonious system. Generalization was also, perhaps, facilitated by the very exiguity of Ibn Khaldun's historical knowledge. For, knowing practically nothing of the history of the Ancient empires and the Greek and Roman city states and republics,¹ the, only records to which he had access were those of the Persians, Arabs, Berbers and, to a lesser extent, Spaniards, in all of which he could meet only the same fundamental forms of state, viz. tribal states and despotic kingdoms or empires.²

Of course this does not explain *how* he was able to build up such an imposing system, but the answer to that question would be practically the same as the answer to the question : "What makes a genius see things which his contemporaries do not see ?"

As an illustration of Ibn Khaldun's generalizations we may take three of his statements, viz. :

Nomadic tribes conquer sedentary societies because of their greater cohesiveness.

¹ Generally speaking, it may be said that although the Arabs occupied the southern half of the Roman Empire and inherited much of the Greco-Latin culture, their knowledge of this culture was very uneven. Thus, whereas they fully understood classical science, medicine, metaphysics, logic, and mathematics, and indeed contributed much of their own in these matters, they were hardly, if at all, affected by classical religion, art, literature, ethics and politics. Their knowledge of Greek and Roman history was most sketchy, and the democratic institutions of the city state remained practically unknown to them.

² There is, however, a passing reference to cities governed by a council, perhaps a reminiscence of the republic of Seville, in which his ancestors had played a leading part.

The combination of a tribal solidarity and a religious drive is overwhelming.

Conquest tends to be followed by luxury and softening, which leads to the decay and annihilation of the ruling dynasty.

The first of these statements needs no illustration : it is writ large over every page of Islamic history and was particularly conspicuous in North Africa at the time of Ibn Khaldun. Moreover, the restlessness of the tribes and their constant search for new lands to relieve their population pressure provides one of the main motive forces in the history of the Near East from the remotest antiquity. A mind like that of Ibn Khaldun could not fail to observe the importance of such a factor in explaining historical change in the past, present, and, as far as he could see, indefinite future, since the pressure of the tribes was never likely to relax.

The second two can be illustrated from the rise and fall of almost any Muslim dynasty. For the sake of illustration we will sketch the history of four such dynasties.

The first of these is the Islamic Caliphate based on the message of Mohammad and the power of Quraish. Its rapid conquest of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Persia, North Africa, Spain and Central Asia, and its subsequent decay, with the replacement of the Arabs first by the Persians, and then by the Turks, as a ruling group, is too well known to require elaboration.

Less well-known examples of the power of the union of religion and the sword in Islam and of the rapid decay of dynasties in rich countries, which Ibn Khaldun had in mind, were the Fatimites, Al Murabitun (Almoravide) and Al Muwahhidun (Almohade).

The Fatimite dynasty was founded in Tunisia in 909 by 'Ubaid Allah, who claimed to be the Mahdi (divinely guided one). North Africa, as far as the Atlantic, was rapidly conquered and Egypt was occupied in 969, after which most of Syria was

annexed. In the fertile and wealthy land of Egypt the dynasty attained unparalleled magnificence, but during the reign of Al Hakim (996-1021) its fibre began to deteriorate and, after retaining a shadowy authority, it was extinguished by Saladin in 1171.

The Al Murabitun are an even more striking illustration of Ibn Khaldun's contentions. Started in the middle of the eleventh century as a fraternity of veiled soldier monks, on an island in the lower Senegal, the movement grew rapidly, absorbing mainly Berber elements, and soon came to control most of North Africa. Invited over to Spain, the Al Murabitun first defeated the Christians and then, lured by the riches of the country, returned to overthrow the ruling dynasty in 1090. But the refinement of Spain proved their undoing and in 1147 they were overthrown by the more savage and virile Al Muwahhidun.

The Al Muwahhidun provide the last example of the power of tribalism and religion and the demoralizing effect of luxury. They were a religious sect, founded among the Berber tribes at the beginning of the twelfth century. By 1147 they had overthrown the Al Murabitun in both Africa and Spain, after which they extended their rule as far as the borders of Egypt. Under their rule, and partly thanks to their efforts, Muslim philosophy reached its zenith with Ibn Tufail and Ibn Rushd. Their defeat by the Christians at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 led to their expulsion from Spain. They retained their authority in North Africa until 1269, when they were replaced by the Berber Banu Marin.

So much for Ibn Khaldun's place in the history of Arabic thought. And if, to the best of our knowledge, he had no predecessors he certainly had no successors in the world of Islam.¹

¹ Traces of Ibn Khaldun's influence can, however, be seen in the work of the Egyptian historian Al Maqrizi, who attended his lectures in Cairo —see 'Inan, *op. cit.*

Ibn Khaldun was indeed singularly unlucky in his times. Had he been born two or three centuries earlier he might have been translated into Latin, along with so many other Arab philosophers, scientists and historians, and thus have influenced European thought. Two centuries later he might have profited from the West, where, he reports, "the philosophical sciences are reviving in numerous centres in Rome and other lands of the Franks".

He would then have seen that the Social Solidarity he describes is not a phenomenon confined to tribal societies ; he would have widened his very exiguous knowledge of the Classical and the medieval worlds—not to mention those of Egypt and Mesopotamia ; and his theory would have come out richer and deeper.

All thought is limited by the social conditions which surround the thinker, but hardly any great thinker has been hemmed in by such close intellectual barriers, hardly any has had so little material with which to build up a theory of society, as Ibn Khaldun. And most of the weaknesses of his theories can be attributed to the poverty and unreliability of the material on which he worked.

Ibn Khaldun remained for five centuries a prophet without honour in either his own country or abroad. During the last hundred years, however, he has increasingly attracted the interest of both Arab and Western scholars. He was discovered by the West too late to influence its thought ; but there, perhaps even more than in the East, his genius has been fully appreciated. Robert Flint's tribute to him is a fitting conclusion to this brief introduction.

Whether on this account he is to be regarded or not as the founder of the science of history is a question as to which there may well be difference of opinion ; but no candid reader of his *Prolegomena* can fail to admit that his claim to the honour is more valid than that of any other author previous to Vico.

CHAPTER ONE. METHOD

CONTENTS OF THE PROLEGOMENA

. . . The contents of this book fall into six sections :
The first deals with human society in general, its kinds and its geographical distribution ;
The second, with nomadic societies, tribes and savage peoples ;
The third, with States, the spiritual and temporal powers, and political ranks ;
The fourth, with sedentary societies, cities, and provinces ;
The fifth, with crafts, means of livelihood, and economic activity ;
The sixth and last, with learning and the ways in which it is acquired.

I have begun with the nomadic form of society because it is prior to the others, as will be shown later ; for the same reason I mentioned the State before towns and provinces. Economic activity was put before learning because the former is a necessity, the latter a luxury ; and necessities precede luxuries. Crafts were included under economic activity because in certain respects they pertain to it. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 67]

NATURE OF HISTORY

HISTORY is the record of human society, or world civilization ; of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity ; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another with the resulting kingdoms and states, with their various ranks ; of the

different activities and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts ; and, in general, of all the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 56]

SOURCES OF ERROR IN HISTORICAL WRITING

. . . All records, by their very nature, are liable to error—nay, they contain factors which make for error. The first of these is *partisanship* towards a creed or opinion. For when the mind receives in a state of neutrality and moderation any piece of information it gives to that information its due share of investigation and criticism, so as to disengage the truth it contains from the errors ; should the mind, however, be biassed in favour of an opinion or creed, it at once accepts every favourable piece of information concerning this opinion. Therefore, partisanship acts as a blinker to the mind, preventing it from investigating and criticizing and inclining it to the reception and transmission of error.

The second factor conducive to error is *over-confidence* in one's sources. Such sources should be accepted only after thorough investigation involving the criticism of falsehoods and the correction of distortion.¹

A third factor is the *failure to understand* what is intended. Thus many a chronicler falls into error by failing to grasp the real meaning of what he has seen or heard and by relating the event according to what he thinks or imagines.

A fourth source of error is a *mistaken belief in the truth*. This

¹ The process of criticism known as *Ta'dil wa Tajrih* was extensively applied by Muslim scholars to the Hadith, or Traditional Sayings of the Prophet. In this way many of these traditions were rejected as spurious.

happens often, generally taking the form of excessive faith in the authority of one's sources.

A fifth factor is the inability rightly to *place an event in its real context*, owing to the obscurity and complexity of the situation. The chronicler contents himself with reporting the event as he saw it, thus distorting its significance.

A sixth factor is the very common desire to *gain the favour* of those of high rank, by praising them, by spreading their fame, by flattering them, by embellishing their doings and by interpreting in the most favourable way all their actions. The result of the foregoing is to give a distorted version of historical events. For all men love praise, and people, in general, seek the pleasures of this world and the means that lead thereto, such as honour and wealth, nor do they in general seek virtue or try to gain the favour of virtuous men.

The seventh cause of error, and the most important of all, is *the ignorance of the laws* governing the transformations of human society. For every single thing, whether it be an object or an action, is subject to a law governing its nature and any changes that may take place in it. If, therefore, the historian understands the nature of events and of changes that occur in the world, and the conditions governing them, such knowledge will help him more than anything else to clarify any record and to distinguish the truths it contains from the falsehoods. And it has often happened that historians have accepted and transmitted stories about events which are intrinsically impossible, as did Mas'udi when relating the adventures of Alexander the Great. Thus, according to him, Alexander was prevented by sea monsters from building the port of Alexandria. Thereupon he plunged to the bottom of the sea in a glass case enclosed in a wooden sarcophagus, made a picture of the devilish monsters he saw there, cast metal statues in the shape of these beasts, and

set them up on the walls of the buildings ; no sooner had the monsters emerged from the sea and seen these statues than they fled away, and thus the city was completed. All of this is related in a long tale full of impossible myths. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 56]

. . . Another cause of error is *exaggeration*. . . . Thus we find that most of our contemporaries give free rein to their imagination, follow the whisperings of exaggeration, and transgress the limitations of customary experience, when speaking of the armies of contemporary states, or of states which existed in the recent past ; or when discussing the troops of Muslim or Christian nations ; or when enumerating the revenues of kings, or the taxes or dues levied by them ; or when estimating the expenditure of the wealthy, or the fortunes of the rich. Should we, however, check up these figures by asking the responsible officials for the number of their troops, or the rich for a statement of their wealth, profits, and expenditures, the result is apt to come to less than a tenth of the popular estimate.

The real cause of this error is that men's minds are fond of all that is strange and unusual, and that the tongue easily slips into exaggeration, while the investigator and critic is apt to overlook things, so that he does not try to check his statements or weigh them up in a fair and critical spirit of enquiry and investigation, but rather gives his imagination a free rein and lets his tongue loose in a pasture of falsehoods. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 11]

HISTORICAL CHANGE

. . . Another hidden source of error in historical writing is the *ignoring of the transformations* that occur in the condition of

epochs and peoples with the passage of time and the changes of periods. Such changes occur in such an unnoticeable way and take so long to make themselves felt, that they are very difficult to discern and are observed only by a small number of men.

What we mean is that the conditions of the world, and of the nations, with their customs and modes of occupation, do not persist in one unchanging state or stable pattern, but are transformed with the passage of time and move from one condition to another. And just as individuals and times and cities change, so do zones of climate¹ and epochs and countries and states—for such is the law laid down by God for his worshippers.

Thus there were in the world the First Persians² and the Assyrians and the Nabateans³ and the kingdom of the Tubba'ites⁴ and the Israelites and the Egyptians, each of which had its own form of state, peculiar to itself; its own policy; its own industries and language, conventions and ways of association within the group. Each had its own kind of civilization, as witness the monuments they have left behind them. Then came the Second Persians⁵ and the Romans and the Arabs⁶ and the Franks; conditions were by then changed and customs transformed, remaining in certain ways identical or closely similar to what they had been, and in other ways different or even opposite. Then came Islam, spread by the tribes of Mudar⁷; whereupon conditions were once more revolutionized, taking much the same forms which we know to-day and which have been transmitted to us by our ancestors. Later on

¹ See below, Chapter Two.

² The Achaemenian Empire.

³ Babylonians.

⁴ The old South Arabian Kingdom.

⁵ The Sassanian Empire.

⁶ Ibn Khaldun probably refers either to the late Yemenite kingdom or to those of Ghassan (in Syria) or Hira (in Mesopotamia).

⁷ North Arabian tribes.

the power and glory of the Arab dynasties was overthrown; and the generations that had laid the foundation of that power and glory passed away : hegemony then passed into the hands of the non-Arabs, such as the Turks in the East, the Berbers in the West, and the Franks in the North ; and with the passing away of the Arab dynasties certain nations disappeared and certain customs and conditions were changed and eventually forgotten.

. . . The cause of these changes in conditions and customs is that each people follows the customs of its rulers ; as the proverb has it : "The people follow the religion of their king." Now a dynasty will adopt many of the customs of its predecessors, while not forgetting its own, hence the prevalent set of customs will differ from that of the preceding generation. Should the ruling dynasty be supplanted by yet another, which will in turn mix its own customs with those prevailing, a new state of affairs will come about, which will differ from the first stage even more than it differs from the second.

This gradual change, in the direction of increasing difference, will proceed until it ends in total dissimilarity. And as long as peoples and generations continue to succeed each other in power and hegemony, so long will there continue to be a change in customs and institutions.

Now men are naturally inclined to judge by comparison and by analogy ; yet these are methods which easily lead to error. Should they by any chance be accompanied by inattention and hastiness, they can lead the searcher astray, far from the object of his enquiry. Thus many men, reading or hearing the chronicles of the past, and forgetting the great changes, nay revolutions, in conditions and institutions that have taken place since those times, draw analogies between the events of the past and those that take place around them, judging the past by what

they know of the present. Yet the differences between the two periods may be great, thus leading to gross error.

An example illustrating our point is provided by the story of Al Hajjaj,¹ who, according to his biographers, was the son of a teacher. Now teaching is, nowadays, a profession which is held in great contempt by the upper classes, and teachers are poor, weak and of humble origin. . . . Yet teaching held a very different status during the first two dynasties of Islam.² In fact, it was not a profession at all, but rather the transmission of the words of the Lawgiver [i.e. Mohammad], and the inculcation of those precepts of faith which were unknown. Hence it was the noblest and proudest members of the [Islamic] community who undertook to teach the Book of God and the Laws of His Prophet, and this they did for the sake of transmitting knowledge, not as a paid work. For the Book was *their* Book, revealed to a Prophet chosen from among *themselves* to serve as a guide to *them*. And Islam was *their* religion, for which they had fought and died, which had been given to them among all the nations, and in which they gloried. Hence arose the urge to proclaim and explain it to all, an urge which no considerations of pride could blame or rebuke. . . .

When, however, Islam had been established and the community had struck solid roots, the most distant peoples could learn its tenets from their own native teachers. Meanwhile its institutions had been modified ; for many maxims, applicable to events of daily life, were deduced from Canon Law. It

¹ Al Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf (661-714), one of the greatest of the early Arab statesmen, famous alike for his administrative capacity, his severity, and his eloquence. He was successively appointed by the Omayyads as governor of Arabia and Iraq, after he had pacified both provinces.

² I.e. the Orthodox Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali) and the Omayyads.

therefore became necessary to codify the sacred law in order to protect it from misinterpretation. Knowledge of the law then became a skill, to be acquired by learning ; in other words, it took its place among the crafts and professions (as will be mentioned later, in the chapter on Knowledge and Teaching).

The nobles and heads of tribes, on the other hand, devoted themselves entirely to politics and administration, leaving learning to such others as were desirous of following it. Learning therefore became a profession, despised by nobles and only followed by the humble, so that teachers were looked down upon by men of high rank. Now the father of Al Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf belonged to one of the leading families of Thaqif, a tribe which is regarded as the peer of Quraish¹ itself. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 44]

SOCIOLOGY AS AN AID TO HISTORY

. . . Consider then the relative levels of the different societies and do not deny the truth of a recorded event merely because you have not come across its counterpart in your own age and field of experience. You would be merely constricting your gullet when pecking at the grains of truth ! Thus many of the more educated classes reject outright such narratives concerning past societies. In this they are mistaken ; for conditions of existence vary and the state of society fluctuates, hence one who knows only an inferior or medium form of society should not think it comprises all possible forms and potentialities.

Should we, for instance, compare what we know for certain regarding the Omayyad, or Abbaside, or Obaidite² dynasties with what we see of the inferior states of to-day, we could not but observe an enormous difference between the two. This

¹ See below, p. 146, footnote 4.

² The Fatimites of Egypt.

difference arises out of the difference in the power and level of civilization of the two sets of kingdoms. Nor can we deny what is reported of these past kingdoms, in view of our wide and clear knowledge of many of their aspects—nay of the commonplace and universal nature of this knowledge ; and in view too of the remains of their monuments—for, as we have said before, the monuments left by a society are proportionate to the original power of that society. . . .

The historian should therefore trace back all narratives to their origin, and should preserve a watchful attitude, using his mind and right intuition to distinguish what is naturally possible from what is impossible and rejecting anything that falls outside the bounds of possibility.

And by possibility we do not mean mere *logical* or *mental* possibility, for that is very wide and cannot help in evaluating questions of fact ; rather we mean material possibility (i.e. what is possible for a thing, given its nature). For if we consider the origin of the thing, its kind and species, and its size and power, we have a standard by which to judge its conditions and the limits of its possibilities [and anything falling outside these limits we must declare impossible].¹

[Vol. I, p. 327]

. . . And such clarification [i.e. of narrated events] can be undertaken only in the light of the knowledge of the characteristics of society. This is the best method, and the surest, for clarifying narratives and sifting the truth they contain from the errors. It is prior to attempting to clarify by criticizing and amending² the chronicles of historians, for such internal criticism and

¹ This sentence, which is omitted by Quatremère, is to be found in the Beirut-Cairo edition.

² For *Ta'dil wa Tajrih* see above, page 27, footnote 1.

amendment of sources should be attempted only after ascertaining whether the event related is intrinsically possible or impossible ; for if it be impossible there is no point in attempting to criticize and amend.

Critics have contented themselves with impugning a narrative when the meaning of its words does not admit of a logical explanation or interpretation ; while in Canon Law the method adopted for ascertaining the truth of a narrative is that of criticism and amendment. This is because this subject deals with normative prescriptions and injunctions which have been imposed by the Lawgiver and therefore become binding once they are proved to be authentic, their authenticity being best judged by the confidence felt in the narrator's accuracy and integrity.

Narratives dealing with actual events, on the other hand, can be judged only by considering their correspondence to reality. Hence an examination of their intrinsic possibility is prior to, and more important than, the criticism of the source. In other words, the value of a precept or injunction lies in itself, whereas that of a narrative of events lies in its correspondence to external reality.

If that be so, then the criterion for distinguishing the possible from the impossible is to be found in the study of human society, with a view to distinguishing between those of its phenomena which are essential and arise from its very nature, those which are accidental and unimportant and finally those which cannot occur in it. Such a study gives us a standard by which we can infallibly and indubitably mark off truth from error in any narrative concerning social phenomena. . . . And this is the object of this our first book. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 60]

THE NEW SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

... This science then, like all other sciences, whether based on authority or on reasoning, appears to be independent and has its own subject, viz. human society, and its own problems, viz. the social phenomena and the transformations that succeed each other in the nature of society.

Know, too, that the study of this subject is new and of great value, being the fruit of much investigation and research. It has nothing to do with Rhetoric . . . which is the art of making convincing and useful speeches and of swaying the masses towards or against a given view. Nor is it connected with Political Science, which is the ordering of the household or city, according to the dictates of ethics and wisdom, so that the multitudes may follow the path that leads to the preservation of the species. These two arts may resemble our science, in their subject matter, but they are distinct from it.

It seems to be a new science which has sprung up spontaneously, for I do not recollect having read anything about it by any previous writers. This may be because they did not grasp its importance, which I doubt, or it may be that they studied the subject exhaustively, but that their works were not transmitted to us. For the sciences are numerous, and the thinkers belonging to the different nations are many, and what has perished of the ancient sciences exceeds by far what has reached us. Where, for instance, is the learning of the Persians, which Omar¹ ordered to be destroyed at the Arab conquest²? And

¹ Omar (died 644) was the second, and greatest, of the "Orthodox Caliphs" who succeeded Mohammad. During his reign, Iraq, Syria and Egypt were conquered, and the social, political and administrative institutions of the Islamic state were established.

² There is no historical basis whatsoever for the often repeated legend that Omar ordered the destruction of Greek and Persian books, saying

where is the learning of the Chaldaeans, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, who have left behind them monuments which testify to their knowledge? And where is the learning of the Egyptians and their predecessors? In fact, we have inherited the learning of only one people, the Greeks, and that is due to the interest shewn in it by the Caliph al Mamun,¹ who spent much money and used the services of many scholars in getting it translated into Arabic. Of other nations we know nothing.

And if it be true that every complex interconnected entity should be studied with the object of understanding the changes that occur in its nature, it follows that every subject matter should constitute a separate science. But it is probable that scholars are attracted by the fruits of learning. Now the fruits of this science are historical events, as has been shown, so that although the science is honourable in itself and in its subject, its practical results—the correction of historical narratives—were probably too slight to attract scholars. . . .

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that their contents either agreed with the teachings of the Koran, in which case they were superfluous, or else contradicted the Koran, in which case they were false—see A. J. Butler: *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*.

¹ Al Mamun (786-833), son of Harun al Rashid, supplanted his elder brother al Amin in 813. A great patron of letters and science, he sponsored the translation of Greek texts, established an astronomical observatory and founded or enlarged several libraries.

CHAPTER TWO. GEOGRAPHY

THE EARTH

SCIENTISTS have shown that the earth is spherical in shape and surrounded on all sides by water, as though it were a grape floating on water. . . .

One should not, however, imagine that the water is *underneath* the earth ; for the natural "underneath" is the middle of the earth, the centre of its sphere, towards which all weights tend. The other parts of the earth then, and the water, are "above", and the only sense in which a thing may be said to be "underneath" is in relation to something else.

That part of the earth which is not covered by water constitutes half of its surface ; it is, circular in shape and is surrounded on all sides by the enveloping Ocean. . . .

This dry part of the earth contains more waste and deserted land than inhabited areas, the deserted areas in the southern part being greater than in the northern. The inhabited parts lie chiefly in the North and have the shape of a convex surface lying between the Equator and a circle of the sphere, marked off by a range of mountains which divide it from the surrounding Ocean. . . .

It has been estimated that the dry part of the earth covers about half its total surface, or less, and the inhabited part, about a quarter of the dry land. The inhabited part of the earth is divided into seven zones.

The Equator, running from West to East, cuts the Earth into two halves along the biggest circle of the sphere, just as the zodiac and the equinoctial lines are the greatest circles of the celestial sphere.

The zodiac is divided into 360 degrees, each of which is 25 *farsakh* long¹. . . . The equinoctial line is in the same plane as the Equator ; between it and each of the poles there are 90 degrees.

The inhabited part of the world runs from the Equator to the 64°, all the parts north of that line being uninhabited because of the extreme cold and ice, just as the parts south of the Equator are uninhabited because of the intense heat.

[Vol. I, p. 73]

FROM this [i.e. owing to the increase of heat as one moves south] certain philosophers have deduced that the Equator and the lands lying south of it are deserted. Yet several eyewitnesses and travellers have reported that these regions are in fact inhabited. This objection may be met by saying that the philosophers do not maintain that no life can exist in these regions. Rather they have been led by their arguments to the conclusion that, owing to the excessive heat, living beings decay rapidly, so that the existence of a human population is barely, if at all, possible. And in fact the regions lying on the Equator and south of it are reported to be very sparsely populated.

Ibn Rushd maintains that the zone along the Equator is temperate and that the regions lying south of it are similar to those lying to the north, and are therefore inhabited in a like manner. His view cannot be refuted on the ground of the decay of things ; it does not, however, take into account the fact that the ocean covers, in the south, the area corres-

¹ According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* the *farsakh* (Persian *parasang*) is about 3.88 miles. Ibn Khaldun's estimate of the length of the degree is too high. Earlier Arab scientists had given a figure within 1% of the correct length.

ponding to the inhabited regions of the North. Temperate Zones are therefore absent in the South owing to the extent of the ocean. . . .

Philosophers have divided the inhabited world [north of the Equator] into seven zones divided by imaginary lines running West to East. The first zone has as its southern limit the Equator (south of which apart from those inhabited regions mentioned by Ptolemy there are only deserts stretching to the enveloping ocean) ; the second zone lies North of the first ; and so on for the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh zones ; the last named constituting the northern limit of human habitation. North of the seventh zone lie wastes stretching to the enveloping ocean. . . .

[Vol I, p. 86]

[IN order to make intelligible Ibn Khaldun's remarks on the influence of climate on society, and also to give an idea of the geographical knowledge of the period, we have given a list of some of the regions mentioned as lying in the different zones, beginning with the western regions. It must not, however, be concluded that each place mentioned lies, according to Ibn Khaldun, east of the previous one, for lack of space prevents us from indicating the northern and southern directions within each zone. Thus, for example, he puts Frisia north of Saxony and Bohemia south of it.]

First Zone—Isles of the Blessed ; the Niger ; Nubia ; Sources of the Nile ; Dongola ; Abyssinia ; Indian Ocean ; Yemen ; The land of the Waqwaq¹ ; Ceylon ; Southern China.

¹ Arab geographers believed the coast of Africa to go much further east than it actually does. Hence the name Waqwaq, usually applied to Madagascar, was sometimes used to designate Sumatra.

Second Zone—Sahara ; Upper Egypt ; Gulf of Suez ; Hejaz ; Najd ; Persian gulf ; Bahrain ; Indian Ocean ; Scinde ; The Indus ; Kabul ; Cashmere ; China.

Third Zone—Atlas mountains ; Morocco ; Mediterranean sea ; Algeria ; Tunisia ; Tripolitania ; Cyrenaica ; Middle Egypt and the Delta ; Palestine ; Southern Cyprus ; Syrian desert ; Southern Iraq ; Southern Persia ; Afghanistan ; Oxus ; Bactria ; Soghdiana ; Tibet ; Land of Khirgiz and Turkomen ; Northern China.

Fourth Zone—Straits of Gibraltar ; Portugal ; Southern Spain ; Gascony ; Balearic islands ; Sardinia ; Sicily ; Malta ; Calabria ; Adriatic ; island of Peloponnesus ; Crete ; Cyprus ; Syria ; Mesopotamia ; Southern Armenia¹ ; The Tigris and Euphrates ; Yaxartes river ; Persia ; Kurdistan ; Azerbaijan ; territory of the Kaimaks ; Turkestan.

Fifth Zone—Atlantic Ocean ; northern Spain ; Pyrenees ; Gascony ; Poitou ; Alps ; Burgundy ; North Italy ; Lands of the Germans ; Adriatic ; Macedonia ; Constantinople ; Anatolia ; Armenia ; Caspian sea ; mouth of the Volga ; Georgia ; Sea of Aral ; Caucasus.²

Sixth Zone—Atlantic Ocean ; Brittany ; England³ ; Normandy ; Flanders ; France ; Burgundy ; Frisia ; Lorraine ; Saxony ; Bohemia ; Hungary ; Carpathian mountains ; Poland ; Russia ; Black sea ; Land of the Alans and Bulgars ; Land of the Khazars and Bashkirs ; Volga ; Land of the Kipchaks ; Caucasus.

Seventh Zone—Atlantic ocean ; Northern England ; Iceland ;

¹ Armenian rule extended, at times, to Cicilia and the Mediterranean.

² The Arabs believed the Caucasus to lie much further to the north-east, roughly where the Great Wall of China stands.

³ Described as “ a very big island including many towns and forming a powerful state ”.

Island of Denmark ; Norway ; Poland ; Finmark ; Russia ; Sources of Volga ; Land of Bulgaria ; Land of Kipchaks ; Wall of Gog and Magog ¹ ; Ocean.

[Vol. I, p. 93]

INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE

We have shown that the inhabited portion of the dry part of the globe is the north-central part, the northern regions being too cold and the southern too hot for habitation. The North and the South representing two opposite extremes of cold and heat, it follows that there is a gradation of temperature between them, so that the part midway between them is temperate. The Fourth zone, then, is the most temperate part of the earth, followed by the Third and Fifth ; the Second and Sixth are much less temperate and the First and Seventh even less so.

This is why we find that sciences, crafts, buildings, dresses, foods, and fruits, nay, even animals, and all beings living in the three central zones are characterized by temperance and moderation. Their human inhabitants, too, are more temperate in their bodies, colours, manners, [and religions ; most divine revelations have occurred in those central zones, and we have not heard of any revelation in the northern or southern regions. This is because Prophets and Messengers of God are sent only to the most perfect of men, in body and mind, who are more receptive to what these Prophets and Messengers proclaim. . . . And God (may his name be exalted) has said : " You ²

¹ Perhaps the Great Wall of China. The wall was believed to have been built by Alexander the Great to keep out the tribes of Gog and Magog from harrying the sedentary populations.

² I.e. the Arabs, to whom the Koran was first revealed. Koran, chapter 3, verse 110.

are the best people that has been raised up unto mankind : "].¹

And the inhabitants of these zones are more nearly perfect, owing to their temperance ; they are moderate in their dwellings, clothes, foods, and crafts ; their houses are built of stone and embellished by the crafts. They make extensive use of tools and utensils and have an abundance of metals such as gold, silver, iron, copper, lead, and tin ; they use in their daily transactions, coins made of the two precious metals, and avoid extremes in all their undertakings.

These men are the inhabitants of North Africa, Syria, [Hejaz, Yemen], Iraq, Persia, [India], Scinde, and China ; also the Spaniards and the neighbouring Franks and Galicians [as well as the Romans and Greeks],¹ and those other peoples dwelling close to the latter in the regions of moderate climate. Syria and Iraq are the most temperate of all, being in a central position on all sides.²

¹ The sentences and words in brackets which are omitted in Quatremère's edition have been taken from the Beirut-Cairo edition.

² Ibn Khaldun's knowledge of geography was no better than that of his contemporaries. In particular, his location of the seven zones of climate is obviously faulty. For if these zones are of equal breadth each must cover about 13 degrees of latitude. The First and Second zones, then, would cover all the regions south of upper Egypt, including Yemen, southern India, Indo-China, and the southern tip of China. The third zone would lie between 26° N. and 39° N., thus including Spain, southern Sicily, Greece, Syria and Iraq as well as Persia, the greater part of China and Japan. The Fourth zone would lie between 39° N. and 52° N., thus including southern England, France, Italy, most of Germany and southern Russia. The Fifth zone would reach up to the 64° N. and cover most of England, north Germany, Denmark, the southern parts of Norway and Sweden, the Baltic countries and the greater part of Poland and Russia. Once the necessary revisions have been made, it is quite possible to accept Ibn Khaldun's statement that civilization has flourished almost solely in the three central zones.

The inhabitants of the extreme zones, however, such as the First and Second and the Sixth and Seventh, are far removed from moderation in all respects. Their dwellings are of mud or reeds ; their food consists of millet and wild fruits ; their clothes, of leaves or skins ; most of them, indeed, go about quite naked. The fruits and staples of their lands are strange and far removed from moderation. They use copper, iron, or hides, instead of gold or silver, as a basis for their transactions. Their nature is very close to that of brute beasts ; thus it is related of many of the Negro inhabitants of the First zone that they dwell in caves and woods and eat wild fruits, and that they are savage and uncivilized and practise cannibalism. The same, too, is said of the Slavs. . . . In general they do not know of any prophecies nor do they follow any divine laws, though a few of them who live near the fringes of the temperate zones, such as the Abyssinians, who live near Yemen, have been Christians since pre-Islamic times while the inhabitants of Mali,¹ Koko, and Takrur,² whose lands are adjacent to North Africa, are said to have been converted to Islam in the seventh century of the Muslim era.³ We may also include in this category those nations of the Slavs, Franks, and Turks living in the northern zones who have embraced Christianity. With these exceptions, all the inhabitants of these distant northerly and southerly zones are ignorant of religion and science and live more like beasts than men.

¹ Mali—a town, now destroyed, near the Niger. It was the centre of the Mandingo empire, which was overthrown in the seventeenth century.

² Takrur—the name is derived from the Tuculor negroes living on the banks of the Senegal. It also seems to have been the name of a kingdom in the Senegal. The word is often used by Arab geographers to designate the whole of the Muslim Sudan, from the Atlantic to the Nile valley.

³ The Thirteenth A.D.

It is no exception to what we have said to point out that Yemen, Hadramaut, Hejaz and the rest of Arabia falls in the First and Second zones. For Arabia is surrounded on three sides by seas, as we mentioned earlier ; and the proximity of the sea has brought about a certain humidity in the air, which has somewhat lessened the dryness caused by the extreme heat and has introduced a certain degree of temperance.

Certain genealogists, who know nothing of the nature of beings, have maintained that the Negroes are the children of Ham son of Noah, and that their black colour is the result of a curse called down upon Ham by Noah, the effect of which was to change the colour of his skin and to reduce his descendants to slavery. . . .

Now to attribute the black colour of Negroes to Ham shows complete ignorance of the nature of heat and cold and of their effect on the air and the animals that live therein. For this dark colour is found in the inhabitants of the First and Second zones owing to the warmth of the air around them caused by the excessive heat of the South. For the sun reaches its zenith, in those zones, twice a year, at close intervals ; moreover, it stays overhead during most seasons, hence the light is very bright and the great heat strikes them and thus their skins darken.

At the other end of the earth we have the northern Seventh and Sixth zones whose inhabitants' skins are white owing to the coldness of the air around them. For in these regions the sun almost always remains near the horizon, never reaching its zenith and rarely approaching it. Hence the sun gives so little heat that the weather is cold all the year round. Hence, too, the skins of the inhabitants are white verging sometimes on whiteness. The excessive cold also explains the blue eyes, fair hair, and freckled complexion of the inhabitants. And in between these

two extremes come the inhabitants of the Third, Fourth and Fifth zones. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 148]

INFLUENCE OF AIR

NEGROES are generally light-headed, reckless and prompt to mirth, fond of every kind of dancing, and everywhere renowned for their stupidity. The true reason for this, as has been demonstrated by science, is that joy and mirth are caused by the expansion and diffusion of animal spirits [in the organism], and conversely, sorrow, by their condensation and contraction. It has also been demonstrated that heat expands air and vapour, interpenetrates them, and increases their volume. Hence those who are slightly drunk derive therefrom inexpressible joy, owing to the heat given off by the alcohol, which enters the vapour of the animal spirits in the heart and dilates and diffuses it, thus causing mirth. Similarly, those who indulge in hot baths breathe the warm air, which heats their spirits and causes joy, which often expresses itself in singing.

Now as Negroes inhabit hot regions, so that heat has entered into their very compositions, their spirits contain an amount of heat proportionate to their bodies and to the climate. Hence, their spirits compared with those of the inhabitants of the Fourth zone, are warmer and more diffused and, consequently, more prone to mirth and exuberance ; the same factors also explain their light-headedness.

The same is, to a certain extent, true of the inhabitants of coastal plains, owing to the heat of the air caused by the reflection of light from the surface of the sea. These men are more light-headed and merry than the inhabitants of cold highlands and mountains. This can be seen clearly in the people living around Lake Jarid [in Tunisia]. . . .

It can be seen also in the Egyptians, whose country lies in approximately the same latitude as the Jarid district and not very far from it. They are so merry, light-headed, and heedless of consequences that they do not store enough food to last them a year, or even a month, but buy their needs from the market. In Fez, on the other hand, which is situated in the cold highlands of Morocco, the inhabitants are always silent and gloomy, and so prudent that you will often find a man storing enough wheat to last him for years and at the same time going to the market early each morning to buy his daily needs for fear lest something should befall his stores.

If you consider, then, the different zones and countries, you will notice the effect of the air on the character of their inhabitants.

[Vol. I, p. 155]

INFLUENCE OF FOOD

Nor all these temperate zones are equally fertile nor do all their inhabitants enjoy a high standard of living. In some regions the excellence of the soil, the good quality of the plants, and the abundance of population assure their inhabitants an abundance of cereals, rich foods,¹ wheat, and fruit. In other regions the soil is so hot that no plants or grasses grow, hence their inhabitants lead a very hard life. This is true of the inhabitants of Hejaz, and of Yemen, and also the veiled men of Sanhaja² who live in the Sahara near Morocco, between the Berbers and the

¹ The Arabic word " adam " denotes anything that is eaten with bread. In the Near East bread is the staple food, vegetables, meat, butter, oils and spices being eaten with bread.

² Sanhaja—this branch of the Berbers consisted of two groups. First, nomads ranging from Tripolitania to the Atlantic and represented to-day by the veiled Tuaregs of Hoggar. Secondly, sedentary Berbers living around Constantine, and others in the Atlas mountains.

The Sanhaja played an important part in the history of North Africa

Negroes. All these lack cereals and rich foods, their food consisting entirely of meat and milk.

The nomadic Beduins also come in the same category, for although they get some cereals and rich foods from the plateaux, they do so only occasionally and in spite of the opposition of the sedentary dwellers ; hence they cannot get enough of these foods to maintain life, much less to enjoy luxury, and must rely on milk, which compensates them for the absence of wheat. Now it is to be noticed that these inhabitants of the desert, in spite of their lack of cereals and rich foods, are sounder in their minds and bodies than the sedentary people who enjoy a softer life. Their skins are clearer, their bodies purer, their figures more harmonious and beautiful, their characters more moderate and their minds sharper in understanding and readier to acquire new knowledge than those of the sedentary people.

This is a matter vouched for by the experience of all ages. There are many Arabs and Berbers who conform to our description and many of the veiled ones [of Sanhaja] and inhabitants of the highlands of whom reports say the same. The reason for this is probably (and God knows best) that an excess of food, and too much mixing of corruptible and humid foods, is imperfectly distilled in the body and leaves behind it harmful sediments which cause fat, cloud the skin, and disfigure the shape. The evil vapours thus generated ascend to the brain and clog the process of thought, causing dullness, inattention, and intemperance.

This process is well illustrated by the fauna of the steppes and deserts. Compare the gazelle, the ostrich, the antelope, the giraffe, and the wild ass and buffalo with their counterparts who

during the tenth to the twelfth centuries. They have given their name to the Senegal.

For fuller details on this and other Berber tribes, see E. F. Gautier ; *op. cit.*, books IV and V and the map on page 219.

dwell in the settled countryside and rich meadows. The former have more shining and vivid furs, more harmonious limbs, and sharper senses. Thus the gazelle is the brother of the goat, the giraffe of the camel, and the wild ass and buffalo of the domesticated ass and buffalo. The difference between the two sets of animals is great, and arises from the fact that the fertility of the countryside generates unhealthy sediments and unwholesome mixtures in the bodies of the domesticated animals, which have their normal effects on them, while hunger improves the bodies and minds of the wild animals.

The same is true of human beings. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of fertile countries, in which there is an abundance of fruit, vegetables, rich foods and cattle, are rough in body and dull in mind. Compare for instance those Berbers who indulge in wheat and rich foods with those who eat only barley or millet, such as the Musamida¹ and the inhabitants of Ghomara² and Sus³—how much sounder in mind and body are the latter! Compare too the Moroccans, who live on wheat and rich foods, with the Spaniards, whose country produces no butter and who live mainly on millet and in whom one can observe a sharpness of mind, a readiness for learning and a bodily grace which are unique.

[Vol. I, p. 157]

¹ Musamida, also known as Masmuda, was with the Sanhaja, the main branch of the Berbers inhabiting western Morocco. It went over to Islam but kept more or less independent until the 16th century, when the pressure of the Arabs drove it from the plains into the mountains, where the Glawa branch still survives.

² Ghomara, one of the Musamida Berber tribes, which probably occupied the region lying South and West of Tangier. It went over to Islam but soon adopted the ideas of the dissident Kharijite sects and rose in repeated rebellions.

³ Sus, a district in southern Morocco, near Agadir. It is well watered and fertile and has always been famous for its crops.

NOT ALL GROUP DIFFERENCES ARE
RACIAL IN ORIGIN

. . . Genealogists, noticing that each people has distinctive physical characteristics, have concluded that this is due to different racial origins. . . .

The cause of this error is the belief that distinctions between peoples can arise only from racial differences, which is not true. For although certain people have a common ancestry, e.g. the Arabs, the Jews, and the Persians, other peoples are distinguished by the regions they inhabit, or by their special characteristics, e.g. the Slavs, Negroes and Abyssinians. Yet others are distinguished by common habits and characteristics as well as descent, e.g. the Arabs. And there are further possibilities as regards habits and distinctive qualities.

It is therefore false to generalize and to say that all who live in a given region, whether in the North or the South, and who share the same colour or traits or occupation are descended from a common ancestor. The error arises from a failure to observe the nature of things and of regions ; for every thing changes with successive generations and nothing remains constant.

[Vol. I, p. 154]

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS ARE CULTURAL,
NOT INNATE

. . . In the East,¹ however, learning did not cease, but is still flourishing and overflowing owing to the continued and unbroken prosperity of society. For although the great cities in which learning developed, such as Baghdad, Basra, and Kufa,

¹ I.e. the eastern half of the Arab world (Iraq, Syria, Arabia and Egypt) as contrasted with the Maghrib or West (Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco).

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have been ruined, God Almighty has compensated this loss with other mightier cities. Thus learning shifted eastward to Khora-san, in Persia, and Transoxania, then westwards to Cairo and the adjoining regions, which are still flourishing, and actively pursue learning.

The Easterners, then, are generally speaking, deeply rooted in learning and teaching, as in all the other crafts. This is so true that many travellers who go from the Maghrib to the East in search of learning believe that the minds of the Easterners are more developed than those of the Westerners [that they are innately quicker and more thoughtful],¹ and that their reason is, by its very nature, more perfect. They even believe that there is a difference between us [i.e. the Westerners] and them in the very essence of humanity, [and get heated up over this theory owing]¹ to what they see of the superiority of the Easterners in the sciences and the crafts. This is not so; there is no essential difference between Easterners and Westerners, except perhaps in the inhabitants of the extreme zones, such as the First and Seventh zones, whose temperaments, and hence their minds, are far removed from moderation, as we mentioned earlier. The differences between Easterners and Westerners are cultural, deriving from the intellectual capacities acquired [by those who practise the crafts].

We mentioned this point earlier and will now develop it further. Civilized townsmen follow certain codes in matters of living, dwelling, and building, in religious and worldly affairs, and, in general, in all their customs and transactions. These codes, which regulate all their behaviour and their actions, seem to constitute impassable limits. Yet, in fact, they are conventional things, made by man and learned by each generation from

¹ These sentences which are omitted by Quatremère are to be found in the Beirut-Cairo edition.

the preceding one. For there is no doubt that every organized craft affects the soul in such a way as to give it a new mind which will dispose it to acquire another craft and makes the mind readier and more capable of acquiring new knowledge. . . .

The skills acquired in learning, in the crafts and in daily life sharpen men's intelligence and clear their vision by the imprints they leave on the mind. For, as we said before, the mind develops only through experience and the resulting skills which it acquires. Hence [those who live in a civilized environment] acquire a power of judgement derived from the effects of learning and this makes the common people think, wrongly, that they are different in their very nature.

The same holds true of the relation between townsmen and nomads. Townsmen are so much brighter and more intelligent that nomads sometimes think that they [i.e. townsmen] belong to a superior humanity. The truth is that the townsmen has perfected certain skills, observed certain codes, and followed certain civilized customs which are unknown to the nomad. The townsmen, having practised the crafts and acquired certain skills, thinks that any one who is deficient in those skills has not as good an intellect as he has and that the nomad is by birth mentally deficient and inferior to himself. This is not so, for among nomads we find persons endowed with the very highest forms of intellect and understanding. The difference between the two groups arises from the veneer left on the townsmen by the crafts and sciences.

The Easterners being more deeply rooted in learning and, for the reasons given in the preceding chapter, the Westerners being nearer the nomadic stage, fools have thought that the differences between them are due to certain essential qualities possessed by the former and lacking in the latter.

IMITATION OF THE CONQUERORS BY THE VANQUISHED

The vanquished always seek to imitate their victors in their dress, insignia, belief, and other customs and usages. This is because men are always inclined to attribute perfection to those who have defeated and subjugated them. Men do this either because the reverence they feel for their conquerors makes them see perfection in them or because they refuse to admit that their defeat could have been brought about by ordinary causes, and hence they suppose that it is due to the perfection of the conquerors. Should this belief persist long, it will change into a profound conviction and will lead to the adoption of all the tenets of the victors and the imitation of all their characteristics. This imitation may come about either unconsciously or because of a mistaken belief that the victory of the conquerors was due not to their superior solidarity and strength but to [inferiority of] the customs and beliefs of the conquered. Hence, arises the further belief that such an imitation will remove the causes of defeat.¹

Therefore we see the defeated always imitating the victors in their way of dressing, of carrying their arms, in their equipment and in all their mode of living.

Notice, in the same way, how boys imitate their fathers, to whom they attribute all perfection. Notice, too, how, in all countries, the native population generally adopt the dress of the royal garrison stationed in their midst because the latter has imposed its rule upon them. In fact every country which has powerful, conquering neighbours tends, to a large extent, to imitate those neighbours, as we see among the Spanish Muslims

¹ The text is not very clear. The above interpretation seems the most reasonable.

to-day in respect to their Galician [Christian] neighbours. For the Muslims imitate the Galicians in their dress and ornaments and indeed in many of their customs and institutions, even to the extent of having statues and pictures on the walls of their houses and shops. And in this the careful observer will mark a sign of inferiority. . .

[Vol. I, p. 266]

THE ARABS

*Arabs*¹ are, of all peoples, the least versed in the crafts. The reason for this is that they are deeply rooted in nomadism, far removed from sedentary society and its accompanying crafts and other activities. Non-Arabs, on the other hand, whether they are the inhabitants of the East or the Christians dwelling north of the Mediterranean, are, of all peoples, best fitted for practising the crafts, since they have a long tradition of sedentary life and are so far removed from nomadism that the camels which have helped the Arabs to remain in a state of nomadism and savagery and the pastures and sands in which camels thrive, are not to be found among them. This is why the lands of the Arabs, and those conquered by them under Islam, are so deficient in crafts that they [i.e. crafts or their products] are imported from abroad. Notice on the other hand how abundant are the crafts in non-Arab lands such as China, India, the land of the Turks, and the lands of the Christians, which export to other lands.

The Berbers of North Africa are in this respect like the Arabs, owing to their long traditions of nomadism, as may be seen from the scarcity of towns in their country. Hence crafts in North Africa are few and not deeply rooted [and consist] of the weaving of wool and the tanning and sewing of hides. Those

¹ In this and the following selections the word Arab obviously refers to the nomadic Beduin and not to the sedentary Arabs (see Introduction).

two industries in view of the great demand for their products and the abundance of wool and hides in any nomadic society, were developed when the Berbers settled down to sedentary life.

In the East,¹ however, crafts have established themselves since the days of ancient Persian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Israelite, Greek and Roman rule. These lands have practised a sedentary mode of living for many generations, hence the civilized way of life—and therefore the crafts, as we said before—have been cultivated by the inhabitants and have not been wiped out. It is true that Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, and the rest of the Arabian peninsula have always been under Arab rule. Yet this rule has persisted for thousands of years, under different peoples, such as 'Ad, Thamud,² the Amalekites, the Himyarites and their successors, the Tubba'ites and the Adhwa, who built cities and reached the heights of civilization and luxury. In other words there was a long period of established rule and civilization, under which crafts multiplied and struck roots so that they did not disappear with the passing away of the ruling dynasties or the established state but remain flourishing until this day. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 313]

When the Arabs conquer a country ruin quickly descends upon it. This is because the Arabs are a fierce people, their character having been thus moulded by the rough life they lead, until roughness has become a second nature to them. In fact they positively enjoy a rough life, because it enables them to shake off the yoke of authority and to escape political domination.

Now such a character is opposed and contrary to the spread of

¹ I.e. Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Arabia.

² Thamud was a tribe inhabiting Northern Arabia long before the Islamic era. The identity of 'Ad is still obscure. Both names frequently recur in the Koran.

civilization. Thus their favourite occupation is trekking and roaming in the desert, and this is opposed to the establishment of a quiet and sedentary life, on which the growth of civilization depends. Thus, for instance, they will meet their need for stones to prop up their cooking vessels by demolishing a building. In the same way they will get their tent poles and pegs from the roof of a house. As a result of their mode of living, their very presence is inimical to the existence of buildings, which are the very foundation of civilization.

So much for their general outlook. In addition they are accustomed to rob other people ; for they get their wealth at the point of their spear and set no limit to their depredations, plundering any riches, furniture, or utensils on which their eye rests. Hence, when the conquest and domination of a country places them in a position to satisfy their appetites, they soon put an end to all established rules safeguarding property, and by so doing ruin civilization. Moreover, they do not esteem the work of craftsmen and artisans, but impose taxes on them or make them work for themselves without remuneration. Now the crafts, as we shall mention later, are the source of incomes ; if, therefore, craftsmen should cease to be remunerated for their labour, their incentive to work would be weakened, men would no longer make any effort, the established order would be upset, and civilization destroyed.

Again, they are not primarily concerned with establishing law and order or with preventing men from committing evil or aggression against each other. For their main object is to extort money by looting or by fines. Once that object is secured they are not in the least interested in repressing evil-doing or in improving the condition of their subjects or in promoting their welfare. They may, indeed, following their usage, impose fines on transgressors, with the aim of increasing their revenue

and amassing wealth ; but such a light punishment cannot possibly deter evil-doers or transgressors ; indeed it may encourage evil-doing, since the risk incurred is so small compared to the prize obtainable if the crime should succeed. In other words, the subjects who dwell under their rule live in a state approaching anarchy. Now anarchy is fatal to mankind and ruinous to civilization, as we have shown when demonstrating that sovereignty is peculiar to human society and that no human grouping can survive without a ruler.

Lastly, every Arab regards himself as worthy to rule, and it is rare to find one of them submitting willingly to another, be it his father or his brother or the head of his clan, but only grudgingly and for fear of public opinion. Hence there are many princes and chiefs among them, which means that the subjects have to bear the oppression and submit to the exactions of several rulers ; and this, too, contributes to the ruin of civilization. When the Caliph 'Abdel Malik asked a Beduin who had just come [from Iraq] for news of Al Hajjaj, thinking to hear much praise of his excellent administration, he got the following reply : "When I left him, he was the sole oppressor."

Mark how all the countries of the world which have been conquered and dominated by the Arabs have had their civilization ruined, their population dispersed, and even the soil itself apparently transformed. Thus Yemen is in ruins, except for a few districts ; similarly Iraq, which was so flourishing under the Persians, is devastated ; so, too, is Syria at the present day. In North Africa and the Maghrib, which were invaded by the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaim¹ at the beginning of the fifth century of the Muslim era² and ravaged by them during three

¹ Two Arabian tribes which had settled in Upper Egypt and were diverted to North Africa by the Fatimites.

² The eleventh of the Christian era.

hundred and fifty years, ruin and devastation still prevail. Yet before that time all the country lying between the Sudan¹ and the Mediterranean was the centre of a flourishing civilization, as witnessed by the remains of buildings and statues and the ruins of towns and villages. And "God inherits the earth and its inhabitants and He is the best heir of all".

[Vol. I, p. 270]

Generally speaking, Arabs are incapable of founding an empire except on a religious basis such as the Revelation of a Prophet or a Saint. This is because their fierce character, pride, roughness and jealousy of one another especially in political matters, make them the most difficult of peoples to lead, since their wishes concord only rarely. Should they, however, adopt the religion of a prophet or a saint, they have an internal principle of restraint and their pride and jealousy are curbed, so that it becomes easy to unite and to lead them. For religion drives out roughness and haughtiness and restrains jealousy and competition. If, therefore, there should arise among them a prophet or saint who calls upon them to follow the ways of God, eschew evil, cling to virtue, and unite their wills in support of righteousness, their union becomes perfect and they achieve victory and domination.

Yet Arabs are, withal, the quickest of peoples to follow the call to truth and righteousness. For their natures are relatively simple and free from the distorting effects of bad habits and evil ways ; their only grave moral defect is their roughness, which indicating as it does a primitive and uncorrupted nature, can be rectified. For, as the Prophet said, " Each child is born with an unformed nature ", as we said before.

[Vol. I, p. 273]

¹ I.e. the regions of Equatorial Africa, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, inhabited by Negroes.

Arabs are, of all peoples, the least fit for exercising political domination. This is because they are more nomadic than other peoples, moving more freely in the deserts and, because of their simple and rough ways, standing in less need of cereals and other agricultural products. This makes them less dependent on others and therefore less ready to submit to authority.

In fact their chiefs are generally dependent on them, since it is their solidarity which defends [the community].¹ Hence these chiefs must humour them and avoid any form of coercion, for this might cause disunion and end in the destruction of the chief and of the whole community. In properly organized states, however, the rulers must be prepared and able to use force in order to check disobedience, else there will be confusion. . . .

They become fit for ruling only when religion has transformed their character, driving out these [defects] and leading them to restrain themselves and to prevent other people from encroaching on each other's rights, as we said before.

An illustration of this is provided by the empire which the Arabs founded on the basis of Islam. Religion provided for them a foundation for the state, in the form of a Canon Law whose prescriptions seek both the external and the internal welfare of the community. As the [early] Caliphs conformed their action to this law their power increased and their dominion spread. . . .

Later on, however, some of the [Arab] tribes rejected religion and thus lost their statesmanliness. They returned to their wilderness, where they were no longer subject to the authority and judgements [of the ruling dynasty] and thus forgot the ties of solidarity binding them to that dynasty. They reverted to

¹ Ibn Khaldun is contrasting organized kingdoms, where the chief can dispose of a regular standing army, with a tribal society, where the chief has no armed force other than that of the tribesmen themselves.

their original barbarism, their only remaining connection with kingship being that they were of the same race and tribe as the Caliphs. And when the power and authority of the Caliphate had finally departed they lost all their remaining influence and were overcome by the non-Arab peoples.

Thus they dwell in the wild wastes, completely ignorant of statehood and statesmanship—indeed many of them are unaware of the fact that their race enjoyed kingly power in the past. And yet, no people in ancient times established as many kingdoms as they, such as the dynasties of 'Ad, Thamud, the Amalekites, the Himyarites and the Tubba'ites in pre-Islamic days, and the Omayyad and Abbaside dynasties in Islam. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 274]

THE JEWS

A people who have lived in bondage and in obedience to others will find great difficulty in founding an empire. The reason for this is that humiliation and servitude reduce the energy of a people and relax the bonds of their solidarity. Indeed, the very fact of their being subjected by others and humiliated shows that they have lost these qualities. Being accustomed to servitude they are no longer capable of defending themselves, much less of resisting or attacking others.

An illustration of this is provided by the Israelites when Moses, peace be upon him, urged them to conquer Syria, assuring them that God had decreed that they should be victorious. Notice how they failed to respond, saying, "It is peopled by a race of giants ; we will not, therefore, enter it until they have left."¹ What they meant in fact was "until God shall have ejected them by means of His power, not by our efforts—and this would be a miracle worthy of you, O Moses."

¹ Koran, chapter 5, verse 22.

And when Moses insisted that they follow him they showed much stubbornness and rebelled, saying, " Go you and your God and fight for us."¹

Their conduct is to be explained by the fact that they were conscious of their own incapacity to resist or to attack . . . owing to the long period of servitude to the Egyptians which they had had to endure and which had broken their solidarity and given them a subject-mentality. In fact, they did not fully believe what Moses told them, viz. that Syria belonged to them and that, by decree of God Almighty, the Amalekites who dwelt in Jericho would be their prey. Hence they hesitated and refused to advance, knowing their incapacity to attack, owing to a long servitude, and therefore, doubting the words of their prophet and resisting his orders. And it was for this that God punished them by making them wander forty years in the wilderness. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 255]

. . . [Injury has been done] to every nation which has been dominated by others and treated harshly. The same thing can be seen clearly in all those persons who are subjected to the will of others and who do not enjoy full control of their lives. Consider, for instance, the Jews, whose characters owing to such treatment have degenerated so that they are renowned, in every age and climate, for their wickedness and their slyness. The reason for this is to be found in the causes mentioned above. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 265]

THE PERSIANS

It is strange, yet, a fact, that the men of learning in Islam whether in the Religious or the Rational sciences,² have been,

¹ Koran, chapter 5, verse 24.

² Ibn Khaldun divides the sciences into two major divisions :

(1) The Rational sciences—which are common to all races and deducible

with but a few exceptions, Persians. Those of them who were Arabs by race¹ were foreigners in their language, their environment, and their teachers. And this has occurred in spite of the fact that Islam originated as an Arab sect with an Arab founder.

The reason for this is that, at the beginning, the Muslim sect knew neither learning nor crafts, owing to the simplicity of the nomadic life. The rules of Canon Law, which are the commands and prohibitions of God, were given forth in the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet, and transmitted by him and his Companions to the Arab people, who memorized them because there was no learning nor writing of books. . . .

By the time of Harun al Rashid,² however, when the chain of transmitters had lengthened unduly, it was found necessary to write commentaries on the Koran and to fix in writing the Sayings of the Prophet, for fear lest they should be lost. It became, moreover, necessary to study the different sources and to examine critically their authors, in order to discriminate between the true and the false. Moreover, much use was made of the Koran and the Traditions for drawing up rules applicable to everyday life; at the same time the Arabic language began to be corrupted. Hence it became necessary to lay down the rules of grammar, while the Religious sciences developed by the use of intellectual skills for the purpose of deduction, analogy,

from the universal principles of reason—e.g. Logic, Philosophy, Physics, Mathematics, etc.

(2) The Religious sciences—which centre around the science of Exegesis and are therefore ancillary to Muslim Theology—e.g. Grammar, Jurisprudence, Rhetoric, etc.

¹ Or “who invented for themselves an Arab genealogy”, as did many Persians and other non-Arabs.

² Harun al Rashid (763 or 766–809) though by no means the ablest, is the best known of the Abbaside caliphs, largely thanks to the stories told about him and his brilliant court in the *Arabian Nights*.

and comparison. This necessitated the acquisition of ancillary sciences such as a knowledge of the laws of the Arabic language and of those of deduction, analogy, and also of apologetics, owing to the widespread heresies and unbelief.

All these branches developed into sciences requiring certain skills and teaching, and took their places among the crafts. Now, as we have stated before, crafts are peculiar to sedentary peoples, the Arabs being of all men the least disposed towards them. Hence when these sciences developed in a sedentary environment the Arabs forsook them.

The civilized sedentary peoples at that time were the Persians, or those who were politically and culturally subject to them and therefore had developed a skill in the sciences and the crafts owing to a long tradition of civilization under Persian rule. Hence we find such great grammarians as Sibawayhi¹ and after him Al Farisi, and later Al Zajjaj ; all of whom were Persians who grew up speaking the Arabic language, through contact with Arabs, and who discovered its laws, laying down the basis for subsequent generations. Similarly the scholars who studied the Sayings of the Prophet were mainly Persian, or persianized, in language and in breeding owing to the special attention with which these sayings were studied in Iraq and beyond. Again, all the great jurists were Persians, as is well known ; so also were the theologians and most of the commentators on the Koran. In brief, the Persians alone studied and wrote down the sciences, thus demonstrating the truth of the Prophet's saying : " If learning were suspended in the utmost corners of the skies some Persians would attain it."

Those Arabs, however, who forsook a nomadic for a sedentary

¹ The most famous Arabic grammarian (died c. 793) and author of the first systematic text-book on Arabic Grammar, known by the honorific title of Al Kitab (The Book).

life concentrated all their energies on politics, rulership, and war. This bred a disdain for the pursuit of learning as a profession, since it had become one of the crafts ; for the ruling classes always look down on the crafts and professions and all that pertains to them. The Arab ruling class therefore came to despise their non-Arab and their partly Arab men of learning, yet allowed them to carry on, considering that it was their own religion and their own sciences and that those who studied these things could not be utterly despised.

. . . The Rational sciences too did not appear in Islam until scientists had begun to form a distinct class and learning had become a craft. Here, too, the Arabs showed no interest while arabicized Persians took them up along with other crafts. This state of affairs continued as long as Iraq, Khorasan, and Transoxania remained civilized. When these countries were ruined, civilization, which is the indispensable condition for all science and craftsmanship, forsook the Persians, who reverted to nomadism. Hence learning forsook them in favour of more civilized regions, especially Egypt, which is the Mother of the World, the Palace of Islam, and the Spring of crafts and sciences. Some traces of civilization remained in Transoxania also, owing to the influence of the ruling dynasty, and there too is to be found some learning and craftsmanship. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 270]

SCHOLARS AND POLITICIANS

Scholars are of all men those least fitted for politics and its ways. The reason for this is that they are accustomed to intellectual speculation, the search for concepts, and their abstraction from sense-data and clarification in the mind. All these operations aim at attaining the universal aspect of things, not those particular to

their material content, or to a person, generation, nation, or particular class of men. They then seek to apply these universal concepts to external objects ; moreover, they judge things by analogy with similar things, as they are accustomed to do in jurisprudence. Their judgements and views, then, remain purely speculative and do not seek to conform themselves to things until after the thought process is complete.

Moreover, they do not, in general, seek to make their thoughts conform to external reality but rather deduce what ought to exist outside from what goes on in their minds. Thus jurisprudence is built upon texts memorized from the Koran and Tradition and seeks to make outside things conform to its norms, unlike the positive sciences whose validity depends on their conforming to the outside world. In brief, they are accustomed to base their views on speculation and ratiocination, and do not know any other method of approach.

Now those who engage in politics must pay great attention to what goes on outside, and to all the circumstances that accompany and succeed an event. For politics are tortuous and may contain elements which prevent the subsumption of a given event under a universal concept or maxim or its comparison with another similar event. In fact, no social phenomenon should be judged by analogy with other phenomena, for if it is similar to them in certain respects it may yet differ from them in many others. Hence men of learning, who are accustomed to generalizations and the extensive use of analogy, tend, when dealing with political affairs, to impose their own framework of concepts and deductions on things, thus falling into error—hence their unreliability.

The same is true of the sharper and more brilliant men of the world, who because of their quick wits tend to behave like men of learning in their search for concepts and in their use of analogy.

The ordinary sound man of average intelligence, however, whose mind is unaccustomed to such speculation and incapable of practising it, judges each case on its own merits and every category of men or of things according to its own peculiarities, avoiding analogies and generalizations and only rarely departing from the material, sensible aspect of things, like the swimmer who hugs the shore when the sea is rough, as the poet said :

Do not go far when swimming
For safety lies near the shore.

Hence such persons have sound views on political questions and right ways of dealing with their fellow men and therefore succeed in their careers. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 268]

COUNTRYMEN AND TOWNSMEN

Countrymen are morally superior to townsmen. This is because the soul is, by its nature, prepared to receive any impressions of good or evil that may bestamped on it. As the Prophet [Mohammad], peace be upon him, said, "All children are born with the same unformed natures. It is their parents who make of them Jews, Christians, or Zoroastrians."

And the greater the number of impressions of one kind which the soul has received, the further it moves away from the opposite kind and the more difficult it becomes for it to acquire that other kind. Thus the moral man, who has been trained in good habits and has formed inclinations towards virtue, finds it difficult to tread the path of evil ; and conversely for the evil man with vicious habits.

Now townsmen are so immersed in luxury, pleasure-seeking, and worldliness, and so accustomed to indulge their desires, that

their souls are smeared with vice and stray far from the path of virtue. . . .

Countrymen, though also worldly minded, are forced to confine themselves to bare necessities ; they do not seek to indulge their desire for luxury and pleasures. Their habits and actions are relatively simple, hence they are less subject than townsmen to reproach on the grounds of vice and evil doing. In a word, they are nearer to the natural state than are townsmen ; their souls have received fewer evil imprints derived from vicious habits than have those of townsmen and, therefore, respond more readily to treatment. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 225]

Countrymen are more courageous than townsmen. The reason for this is that townsmen, being accustomed to a peaceful and tranquil life of pleasure seeking, delegate the task of defending their persons and properties to their governors and garrisons. Surrounded by thick walls, protected by defences, they live in security and forget the use of arms. Successive generations of such a way of life breed a people accustomed, like women and children, to look to others for protection ; and with time this habit of dependence becomes a second nature.

Countrymen and nomads, on the other hand, live a more isolated life, far from large towns and garrisons, undefended by walls or defences. Hence they look for protection to themselves alone, not trusting others. Always armed and watchful, except for brief moments during camp meetings, sleeping on their mounts, they are ever on the lookout for any sign of danger. Hence they do not fear to wander unaccompanied in the countryside or the wilderness, being full of confidence in their own courage and power. For courage has become one of their deepest qualities and audacity a second nature to them, emerging

whenever occasion calls. And townsmen, however much they may mix with nomads in the steppe or accompany them on their travels, will always be dependent on them and unable to do anything for themselves, as any one can see. . . . And the reason for this, as we have said before, is that man is the creature of his habits and customs, not of his inborn nature and temperament ; for that to which men are accustomed soon becomes to them a second nature or deep-rooted inclination, replacing their original nature and impulses.

[Vol. I, p. 228]

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADERS

COMMERCE, as we have said before, is the increasing of capital by buying goods and attempting to sell them at a price higher than their cost. This is done either by waiting for a rise in the market price ; or by transporting the goods to another place where they are more keenly demanded and therefore fetch a higher price ; or, lastly, by selling them on a long-term credit basis. Commercial profit is small, relatively to the capital invested, but if the capital is large, even a low rate of profit will produce a large total gain.

In order to achieve this increase in capital, it is necessary to have enough initial capital to pay in cash the sellers from whom one buys goods ; it is also necessary to sell for cash, as honesty is not widespread among people. This dishonesty leads on the one hand to fraud and the adulteration of goods, and on the other to delays in payment which diminish profits because capital remains idle during the interval. It also induces buyers to repudiate their debts, a practice which is very injurious to the merchant's capital unless he can produce documentary evidence or the testimony of eyewitness. Nor are magistrates of much help

in such cases, because they necessarily judge on evident proofs.

As a result of all this, the trader can only secure his meagre profits by dint of much effort and toil, or indeed he may well lose not only profits but capital as well. Hence, if he is known to be bold in entering law suits, careful in keeping accounts, stubborn in defending his point of view, firm in his attitude towards magistrates, he stands a good chance of getting his due. Should he not have these qualities, his only chance is to secure the support of a highly placed protector who will awe his debtors into paying him and the magistrates into meting justice out to him. Thus he gets justice spontaneously in the first case, and by compulsion in the second. Should a person, however, be lacking in boldness and the spirit of enterprise and at the same time have no protector to back him up, he had better avoid trade altogether, as he risks losing his capital and becoming the prey of other merchants. The fact of the matter is that most people, especially the mob and the trading classes, covet the goods of others ; and but for the restraint imposed by the magistrates all goods would have been taken away from their owners.

[Vol. II, p. 302]

The manners¹ of tradesmen are inferior to those of rulers, and far removed from manliness and uprightness. We have already stated that traders must buy and sell and seek profits. This necessitates flattery, and evasiveness, litigation and disputation, all of which are characteristic of this profession. And these qualities lead to a decrease and weakening in virtue and manliness. For acts inevitably affect the soul ; thus good acts produce good and virtuous effects in the soul while evil or mean acts produce the opposite. Hence the effects of evil acts will strike root and

¹ Manners is used here in its old, more comprehensive sense.

strengthen themselves, if they should come early in life and repeat themselves ; while if they come later they will efface the virtues by imprinting their evil effects on the soul¹ ; as is the case with all habits resulting from actions.

These effects will differ according to the conditions of the traders. For those of them who are of mean condition and in direct contact with the cheating and extortion of sellers will be more affected by these evils and further removed from manliness. . . . The other kind of traders are those who are protected by prestige and do not have to undertake directly such operations. Such persons are very rare indeed and consist of those who have acquired wealth suddenly, by inheritance or by other, unusual means. This wealth enables them to get in touch with the rulers and thus to gain prestige and protection so that they are released from practising these things [viz. buying and selling] themselves ; instead, they entrust such business to their agents. Moreover the rulers, who are not indifferent to the wealth and liberality of such traders, protect them in their right and thus free them from certain unpleasant actions and their resulting evil effects. Hence they will be more manly and honourable than the other kind of trader ; yet certain effects will still make themselves felt behind the veil, inasmuch as they still have to supervise their agents and employees in their doings—but this only takes place to a limited extent and its effects are hardly visible.

[Vol. II, p. 304]

¹ The meaning is probably that evil acts may either affect a raw, unformed soul or one which has already acquired certain good habits. In the first case they will leave their imprint immediately ; in the second, only after effacing the good habits.

CHAPTER THREE. ECONOMICS

LABOUR AND VALUE

... God created for man all that is in the world. ... And men possess in partnership everything in the world. Once, however, an individual possesses any thing, no other person may appropriate it, unless he give an equal value in exchange for it. Hence, once a man has acquired sufficient strength, he tries to earn an income in order to exchange it for the necessities of life. ... And this gain may come without effort, as when rain improves the crops and so on ; but even then nature acts as an aid which cannot operate unless man co-operate with it, as will be shown. . . .

Gain, therefore, can only come about by effort and labour. ... This is obvious in the crafts, where the labour is apparent. It is also true of income derived from minerals, agriculture, or animal husbandry, for without labour there would have been no produce or profit. . . .

The income which a man derives from the crafts is, therefore, the *value of his labour* ; . . . in certain crafts, the cost of the raw materials must be taken into account, for example, the wood and the yarn in carpentry and in weaving ; nevertheless, the value of the labour is greater because labour plays in these crafts the dominant part.

In other occupations than crafts, too, the value of labour must be added to [the cost of] the produce ; for without labour there would have been no produce.

In many such occupations the part played by labour is apparent, and a greater or smaller share of the value is reserved for it. In other cases, such as in the price of foodstuffs, labour's share may

not be apparent. For although the cost of labour affects the price of grain, as we said before, this is not apparent, except to a small number of cultivators, in countries where agricultural costs are low.

It is clear, then, that all, or most, incomes and profits represent the value of human labour. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 272]

DEMAND

Crafts improve and increase when the demand for their products increases. The reason for this is that a man will not give his labour free of charge, for it is his source of livelihood and gain—indeed, his only source of profit throughout his life. Consequently he will only direct it towards those things which have value in his town, in order to make a profit therefrom. And when a craft is the object of demand, attracting much expenditure [i.e. on the part of consumers], it becomes like a commodity which, being in demand, is brought for sale in larger quantities. Consequently, the people of that city will try to learn [the skills necessary for] that craft in order to make their livelihood from it.

Should the craft, however, not be in-demand, its sales will fall off and there will be no attempt to learn it. It will then be neglected and forgotten.

And this is the meaning of the reported saying of Ali¹: "The worth of every man lies in his skill." That is, that the craft which that man has mastered is the measure of his value, or rather of the value of his labour which is the source of his livelihood.

There is another factor determining the state of the crafts,

¹ The fourth and last of the "Orthodox" Caliphs, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (603-61).

and that is the extent to which they are demanded by the state. For it is the goods demanded by the state which enjoy the highest sales. Other goods, not demanded by the state but only by private individuals, cannot compare with them, for the state is the greatest market, spending on things without too nice a calculation. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 311]

SUPPLY

. . . The cost of supply of agricultural production also affects the value of foodstuffs and determines their price, as may be seen to-day in Andalusia. For when the Christians taking for themselves the rich and fertile lands drove them [i.e. the Muslims] into the coastal and hilly regions, whose soil is unfit for agriculture, the latter were forced to apply themselves to improving the conditions of those fields and plantations. This they did by applying valuable work and manure and other costly materials. All this raised the cost of agricultural production, which costs they took into account when fixing their price for selling. And ever since that time Andalusia has been noted for its high prices. . . .

It is often thought that these high prices in Andalusia are due to the scarcity of grain and foodstuffs. This is not so. For they [the Muslims in Spain] are, to our knowledge, the hardest working and ablest agriculturists in the world ; it is rare to find any of them, whether King or subject, who does not possess a field or a plantation, except for some artisans and professional men, and in addition those immigrant soldiers who defend the country and to whom the King gives provisions as well as fodder for their beasts. No, the real reason for the high level of prices is the one we mentioned above.

The position is just the reverse in the land of the Berbers. Their land is so rich and fertile that they do not have to incur any expenses in agriculture ; hence in that country foodstuffs are cheap.

[Vol. II, p. 241]

PRICE

... Customs duties raise the price of goods. For all middlemen and traders add to the price of their goods all that they have spent on them, including their own expenses. Consequently, customs duties are also included in the value and price of the goods sold. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 257]

. . . If then the district be prosperous, densely populated, and full of luxury, there will be a great demand for such commodities [i.e. other than necessities], each trying to increase his consumption of such commodities according to his condition. Supply, therefore, falls short of requirements ; buyers increase in spite of the small quantity available, while the rich pay high prices for these goods, because of their relatively greater needs. And this leads to a rise in prices, as you can see.

Industrial goods and services are also dearer in prosperous districts for three reasons :

First, because of the greater need, arising out of the luxury prevalent in such districts and the large size of their populations.

Secondly, because the ease with which a livelihood may be earned, and the abundance of foodstuffs in towns, makes craftsmen less ready to accept [poor] conditions of employment and service.

Thirdly, because of the presence of a large number of rich

men, whose need for employing servants and craftsmen is great and who, consequently, compete for the services of the working class and pay them more than the value of their work. This reinforces the position of craftsmen, workers, and professional men, and leads to a rise in the value of their services. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 240]

INTERDEPENDENCE OF PRICES

. . . If, therefore, the price of any goods remains low, whether it be a foodstuff, article of dress or any other goods in general, and there is no offsetting increase in sales [or while the market shows no signs of improving], losses are incurred and the market for these goods is depressed. Traders will therefore not seek to work in that line, and their capital is diminished.

Consider this, first, in the case of agricultural produce. A persistent cheapness in such goods will lead to a deterioration in the condition of all those engaged in agricultural operations ; for their profits will shrink or disappear, and their capital will cease to grow, or grow only very slowly : indeed, they may have to spend out of their capital, which will soon lead them to poverty. And this will be followed by a deterioration in the condition of those engaged in operations connected with agriculture, such as milling, baking and the other industries which transform agricultural produce into foodstuffs. Similarly the position of the army will deteriorate, in cases where their income is derived from taxes on the agricultural population allotted to them by the king. For the taxes paid by the agriculturists will fall off and it will become difficult to support the men who constitute a charge on the district and whose position will therefore deteriorate.

The same will occur, should low prices persist in such articles

as sugar or honey or clothing, leading to a slackening in business in these goods.

We see, therefore, that an excessively low price is injurious to those dealing in the goods whose price has fallen. An excessive rise in prices is also injurious, although in exceptional cases, where high monopoly profits exist, it may result in an increase in wealth. Prosperity is best insured by moderate prices and a quick turnover. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 301]

WEALTH IS A SOCIAL, NOT AN INDIVIDUAL, PRODUCT

THE concentration of real property and estates in the hands of individual countrymen or townsmen does not come about suddenly, nor in one generation, for no one, not even the most prosperous, has a fortune large enough to enable him to acquire an extraordinarily large estate. Such estates are built up gradually: either by inheritance, resulting in the concentration of the property of ancestors and relatives in one heir; or owing to fluctuations in the market. For towards the end of a dynasty, and the setting up of a new state, real estate loses its attractiveness, owing to the poor protection afforded by the state and the general conditions of chaos and ruin: its utility is diminished and its price falls, hence it is acquired for a small sum and passes on by inheritance to other persons.

Now when the new state has firmly established itself and order and prosperity have returned and the country has rejuvenated itself, real estate becomes once more attractive, owing to its great utility, and its price once more rises, and this is the meaning of the terms: "The fluctuation of the real estate market." The owner of such estates becomes among the richest men of his

generation, and this is not due to his own efforts and gains, for the individual capacity is incapable of securing such large fortunes. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 247]

MONEY IS THE MEASURE AND STORE OF VALUE

. . . And God created the two precious metals, gold and silver, to serve as the measure of value of all commodities. They are also generally used by men as a store or treasure. For although other goods are sometimes stored it is only with the intention of acquiring gold or silver. For other goods are subject to the fluctuations of the market, from which they [i.e. gold and silver] are immune. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 274]

MONEY IS NOT WEALTH

. . . Know then that such forms of wealth as gold, silver, precious stones and objects [made out of them] are only minerals and products having an exchange-value, like iron, copper, lead, and the other metals and minerals. It is society, acting through human labour, which brings them to light and increases or decreases their quantity. The quantity existing in the hands of men circulates and is transmitted from generation to generation. And it probably circulates from country to country and from state to state, according to the price paid for it and the [need of] different societies for it. Thus if such wealth has decreased in North Africa, it has not diminished in the land of the Franks or Slavs ; and if it has decreased in Egypt or Syria, it has not diminished in India or China. For it is social effort, the search for profit and the use of tools that cause the increase or decrease of the quantity of precious metals in circulation. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 285]

. . . Consider, as an example, the lands of the East, such as Egypt, Syria, Persia, India, or China ; or the lands lying North of the Mediterranean. Because social life is flourishing there, notice how wealth has increased, the state has grown stronger, towns have multiplied, trade has prospered, conditions have improved. For the prosperity and luxury we see in the Christian traders who come to North Africa passes description. The same is true of the traders who come from the East, and still more those who come from the Far East, such as Persia, India and China, descriptions of whose wealth and prosperity are the everyday talk of travellers and are often dismissed as untrue. The common people probably think that all this is due to the great store of money they have, or to the abundance of gold and silver in their soil, or to their having inherited, alone of all peoples, the golden treasures of the Ancients. This is not so, for the source of the gold we see in these countries is the Sudan, which is closer to North Africa. And we notice that the inhabitants of these countries bring all their goods to foreign markets for purposes of trade. If money had been so abundant in their own lands they would not have brought their goods to others, to be exchanged for money ; indeed they would have dispensed entirely with other people's money. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 244]

KINDS OF OCCUPATION

AN occupation is the seeking and obtaining of means of livelihood. . . . Now this means of livelihood may be obtained either by taking it forcibly from others, according to a customary law, and this process is known as levying a Tax or Impost ; or else it may be obtained by preying on wild animals and killing

them in sea or on land, a means known as Hunting ; or by extracting that produce of domesticated animals which is widely used by people, such as milk from cattle, silk from the silk-worm, and honey from bees ; or by watching and tending plants and trees, with a view to using their fruits ; these two means being called Agriculture ; or else it may be obtained from human activities, whether applied to the use of specific materials and known as Crafts, such as writing, carpentry, tailoring, weaving, horse-riding, and so on ; or else applied to unspecified materials, namely all kinds of services and employments, honest or dishonest ; or else a livelihood may be obtained from preparing goods for exchange, by carrying goods about the country¹ or by cornering the market for them and watching its fluctuations, and this is known as Trade. -

These, then, are the Occupations ; and this is the meaning of certain men of letters, such as Al Hariri,² who said that "Livelihood comes from rulership, trade, agriculture, and industry".

Now rulership is not a natural means of livelihood, so there is no need for us to dwell on it, especially as we discussed taxation and tax-gatherers in Part Two of this Book. Agriculture, Industry, and Trade, however, are natural means of livelihood.

As for Agriculture, it is essentially prior to all the others, for it is simple, natural, and instinctive, not requiring much wisdom or learning. This is why men attribute it to Adam, the father of mankind, declaring that he founded and taught it ; by this they mean to show that it is the oldest occupation and the one most in conformity with nature.

Craftsmanship is the second and later occupation, being complex and scientific and demanding much thinking and under-

¹ Reading "tagallub" (as in the Beirut-Cairo edition) for "taghallub".

² Al-Hariri, author of *Maqamat* (1054-1122).

standing. This is why the crafts are, in general, only to be found among townsmen, who represent a stage posterior to the nomadic. And this, too, is why men attribute it to Idris,¹ the second father of mankind. . . .

As for Trade, although it be a natural means of livelihood, yet most of the methods it employs are tricks aimed at making a profit by securing the difference between the buying and selling prices, and by appropriating the surplus. This is why Canon Law allows the use of such methods, which, although they come under the heading of gambling, yet do not constitute the taking without return of other people's goods.

[Vol. II, p. 276]

STAGES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KNOW, then, that the differences between peoples² arise principally from the differences in their occupations ; for their very union springs out of the need for co-operation in the securing of a livelihood.

And first, before comforts and luxuries, come those occupations which deal with the bare necessities of life. Hence some men devote themselves to agriculture, sowing and planting, and some tend animals such as sheep, cows, goats, bees, and silkworms, with a view to using their produce. And those who devote themselves to agriculture and animal husbandry are compelled by necessity to go out into the open country, which has the space, which in towns is lacking, for fields, pastures, plantations, and so on. Such people must therefore necessarily pursue a nomadic life and for that reason they will

¹ Idris is probably Enoch. The origin of the name Idris has greatly puzzled Orientalists, some tracing it to Andreas, Alexander the Great's cook !

² "Ajial" strictly means generations.

unite, co-operate in economic matters, and have food, dwelling, and shelter only to the extent which answers the bare necessities of life, without any of the superfluities.

Should their standard of living, however, rise, so that they begin to enjoy more than the bare necessities, the effect will be to breed in them a desire for repose and tranquillity. They will therefore co-operate to secure superfluities ; their food and clothing will increase in quantity and refinement ; they will enlarge their houses and plan their towns for defence. A further improvement in their conditions will lead to habits of luxury, resulting in extreme refinement in cooking and the preparation of food ; in choosing rich clothing of the finest silk ; in raising lofty mansions and castles and furnishing them luxuriously, and so on. At this stage the crafts develop and reach their height. Lofty castles and mansions are built and decorated sumptuously, water is drawn to them and a great diversity takes place in the way of dress, furniture, vessels, and household equipment.

Such are the townsmen, who earn their living in industry or trade. Their gains are greater than those working in agriculture or animal husbandry¹ and their standard of living higher, being in line with their wealth. We have shown, then, that both the nomadic and the urban stages are natural and necessary.

[Vol. I, p. 220]

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY

Country life is anterior to town life, the countryside being the origin of civilized town life and a constant source of supply of men to the towns.

¹ The word "badu" is often applied, as here, by Ibn Khaldun to agriculturists as well as pastoralists.

. . . For men seek at first necessities, and only later, when the primary needs have been met, amenities and luxuries. Hence the roughness of country life must precede the refinement of town life. Hence, too, we see countrymen taking urban life as their objective, and striving to settle in towns as soon as they have reached a certain standard of living and adopted certain habits of luxury. This has happened at some time to all nomadic tribes.

The townsman, on the other hand, does not long for the countryside, unless he be forced to do so by exceptional circumstances, or if he be unable to earn a decent living in the town.

Our contention that country life precedes town life, and is its origin, is confirmed by the fact that investigation into the ancestry of the inhabitants of any town will reveal that most of them originated in the countryside adjoining that town, to which their ancestors came when they had improved their condition. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 223]

We have stated before that the state of civilization of the countryside is inferior to that of the towns, because not all necessities can be found in the former. In particular the countryside does not provide farmers with tools and agricultural implements which they require for cultivation, while the crafts, such as carpentry, tailoring and ironwork are completely absent in the countryside. In the same way countrymen lack coins of gold and silver. They have, however, in their stead the yield of their lands and cattle, such as milk, wool, hides and camel hair, which they can exchange for coins.

It should be noticed, however, that the countryside stands

in need of the town in matters of necessity, while supplying the latter with conveniences and luxuries.¹ . . .

[Vol. I, p. 276]

THE PRINCIPAL CRAFTS

HUMAN crafts are numerous, owing to the large number of social activities, and cannot therefore be enumerated. Some of them, however, are necessary to society, or honourable by their very nature ; we will therefore deal with these alone.

The necessary crafts are agriculture, building, tailoring, carpentry, and weaving. The honourable ones include midwifery, writing, papermaking, singing, and medicine.

Midwifery is necessary to society and of wide importance ; for upon it depends the life of the newly born, which is generally preserved ; its subject matter is, therefore, the newly born and their mothers.

Medicine aims at preserving the health of man and the warding off of disease ; it is a branch of the study of nature : its subject matter is the human body.

Writing and its ancillary craft, papermaking, preserve the needs of men from oblivion ; communicate the secrets of the soul to those who are absent and distant ; immortalize the results of human thought and knowledge by setting them down on paper. . . .

Singing deals with the relation between voices and their presentation to human ears in a beautiful form.

These last three crafts lead their practitioners into the presence

¹ This last statement seems highly paradoxical, not to say erroneous. But the passage is very interesting because Ibn Khaldun, unlike so many sociologists, does realize how dependent the countryside is on the towns for its agricultural tools and implements.

of great kings, into their private rooms or their festive chambers, and hence enjoy a prestige not given to other crafts. Other crafts are of secondary rank, and in the main despised. Men's attitude towards them may, however, vary according to what are the objects prized [by society].

[Vol. II, p. 316]

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF OPPRESSION

KNOW then that the arbitrary appropriation by the government of men's property results in the loss of all incentive to gain, when men realize that what they have accumulated will be taken away from them. A loss of incentive will lead to a slackening in enterprise, the slackening being proportional to the extent and degree of confiscation. Thus if confiscation is widespread, covering all forms of economic activity, there will be a general slackening, owing to the feeling that no branch offers any longer any hope of gain. If however confiscation be mild, there will be only a relatively slight falling off in economic activity.

Now the state of a society and the prosperity of business depend on the intensity of human efforts and the search for gain; should, therefore, men slacken in their economic activity the markets would slump and the state of society deteriorate. People would forsake that country and migrate elsewhere in search of gain, the result being a general depopulation and the desertion of cities. And this deterioration in society would be followed by a weakening of the State, for the State is as the Form whose condition follows that of its Matter, Society. . . .

Oppression ruins society, while the ruin of society leads to the weakening and destruction of the State. And do not object that the State has often oppressed great towns and countries

without ruining them. For the matter is a relative one, being a question of the proportion between the degree of oppression and the condition of the inhabitants. Thus if the country is large, well populated, and prosperous, oppression and confiscation will lead to only a slight deterioration, for these things come about only gradually, and this deterioration will be masked by the general business activity and only appear after some time. Moreover, the oppressive State may disappear before the country has been ruined and be replaced by another which will repair the unseen damage caused by its predecessor, so that the harm done will be hardly felt ; this however happens only rarely. Thus the ruin caused to societies by oppression and confiscation is, for the reasons mentioned above, a patent and inevitable phenomenon whose harmful consequences are felt by States.

And do not think that oppression consists merely in taking away wealth and property without cause or compensation, as is generally believed. No, oppression has a wider meaning. Thus all who take away the property of others, or force them to do a certain work, or make unjust claims on them, or impose on them burdens not sanctioned by the law are oppressors. . . .

Among the most oppressive measures, and the ones most deeply harming society, is the compelling of subjects to perform forced work unjustly. For labour is a commodity, as we shall show later, in as much as incomes and profits represent the value of the labour of their recipients . . . nay most men have no source of income other than their labour. If, therefore, they should be forced to do work other than that for which they have been trained, or made to do forced work in their own occupation, they would lose the fruit of their labour and be deprived of the greater part, nay of the whole, of their income. . . .

PRESTIGE HELPS IN THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH

THOSE who combine both wealth and prestige become wealthier, whatever their occupation, than those who lack prestige. This is because a man who enjoys prestige enjoys the labour and services of others who seek his favour or protection. He can therefore draw on the labour of others for the satisfaction of his wants, whether of necessities or luxuries ; the value of that labour, consequently, enters into and swells his income, seeing that he uses the services of others without paying them any compensation. . . .

The incomes of those who entirely lack prestige, on the other hand, will be determined solely by the amount of their capital and the efforts they put forth. This is the position of most traders, and that is why those traders who enjoy prestige are more opulent than others.

The same can be observed in many jurists and theologians. Once their fame has spread, the masses come to believe that helping them is an act agreeable to God ; hence they help them in their worldly affairs and interests, so that these theologians soon become rich without having acquired any wealth other than the value of the services rendered to them by their followers. We have seen many such, in towns, villages or countryside, sitting still in their houses and accumulating a large fortune, while others plough and trade for them.

[Vol. II, p. 286]

CHAPTER FOUR. PUBLIC FINANCE

CHANGES IN THE RATE OF TAXATION

IN the early stages of the state, taxes are light in their incidence, but fetch in a large revenue ; in the later stages the incidence of taxation increases while the aggregate revenue falls off.

This is because the state, if it rests on a religious basis, will exact only dues provided for by Islamic Law, such as the Benevolence Contributions, Land Tax, and Poll Taxes¹ whose rates are low . . . and fixed. Should the state, on the other hand, have achieved conquest through group solidarity, it will rest in its earlier stages on a tribal, nomadic basis. Now the tribal way of life develops the qualities of toleration, generosity, and respect for the property of others as well as restraint in imposing taxes on that property, except very rarely—all of which means that taxes are few and light in their incidence.

Now where taxes and imposts are light, private individuals are encouraged to engage actively in business ; enterprise develops, because business men feel it worth their while, in view of the small share of their profits which they have to give up in the form of taxation. And as business prospers the number of taxes increases and the total yield of taxation grows.

As time passes and kings succeed each other, they lose their tribal habits in favour of more civilized ones. Their needs and exigencies grow. . . . owing to the luxury in which they have been brought up. Hence they impose fresh taxes on their subjects—farmers, peasants, and others subject to taxation ; sharply raise the rate of old taxes to increase their yield ; and

¹ Poll taxes were levied on non-Muslim subjects, in return for exemption from military service.

impose sales taxes and *octrois*, as we shall describe later. These increases grow with the spread of luxurious habits in the state, and the consequent growth in needs and public expenditure, until taxation burdens the subjects and deprives them of their gains. People get accustomed to this high level of taxation, because the increases have come about gradually, without anyone's being aware of who exactly it was who raised the rates of the old taxes or imposed the new ones.

But the effects on business of this rise in taxation make themselves felt. For business men are soon discouraged by the comparison of their profits with the burden of their taxes, and between their output and their net profits. Consequently production falls off, and with it the yield of taxation.

The rulers may, mistakenly, try to remedy this decrease in the yield of taxation by raising the rate of the taxes ; hence taxes and imposts reach a level which leaves no profits to business men, owing to high costs of production, heavy burden of taxation, and inadequate net profits.¹ This process of higher tax rates and lower yields (caused by the government's belief that higher rates result in higher returns) may go on until production begins to decline owing to the despair of business men, and to affect population. The main injury of this process is felt by the state, just as the main benefit of better business conditions is enjoyed by it.

From this you must understand that the most important factor making for business prosperity is to lighten as much as possible the burden of taxation on business men, in order to encourage enterprise by giving assurance of greater profits.

[Vol. II, p. 79]

¹ As Nashaat rightly points out, Ibn Khaldun seems here to have grasped the concept of the optimum rate of taxation.

DISTRIBUTION OF TAXATION

... Distribute [taxes] then among all taxpayers in a fair, just and equitable manner and make them general, not exempting anyone because of his noble rank or great riches, nor even exempting your own officials or courtiers or followers. And do not levy on anyone a tax which is beyond his capacity to pay. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 137—quoted by Ibn Khaldun
from Tahir ibn al Hussein¹]

STATE EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

... Take care of the poor, the widows and the orphans ; pay them special pensions from your Treasury . . . do the same to the blind and to those who can recite the Koran. . . . And, provided this does not overburden the Treasury, build hospitals for sick Muslims, with a staff of physicians and attendants who will cure them and minister to their needs. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 139—quoted from Tahir ibn al Hussein]

A STATE RESERVE FUND IS UNNECESSARY

... Wealth does not fructify when hoarded and stored in safes ; when, however, it is used to improve the condition of the subjects, to safeguard their rights, and to preserve them from harm, it grows and fructifies, greatly benefiting the subjects,

¹ Tahir ibn al Hussein (775-822)—distinguished himself as a general in the civil wars during the reigns of Harun al Rashid and Al Mamun. He was appointed governor of the Eastern provinces and shortly before his death broke away from the Caliphs at Baghdad. His descendants ruled Khorasan till 872.

The quotations reproduced here are from his famous letter to his son.

as well as strengthening the state and raising its prestige and popularity. Let your Reserve Fund, then, consist of expenditure used to improve the condition of Islam and the Muslims. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 133—quoted from Tahir ibn al Hussein]

THE GOVERNMENT AS A MARKET FOR GOODS AND SERVICES¹

. . . And this [i.e. the growth of luxury and civilization] is caused by the increase of population and the rise in the standard of living, which are promoted by the government. For the government gathers the wealth of the subjects and spends it on the court and the officials, who have more prestige than wealth. The money raised from the subjects goes, therefore, to the courtiers whose expenditure finds its way to the large number of private citizens inhabiting the metropolis, who have dealings with the court and officials, whose fortune consequently grows, and whose standard of living rises. These private citizens soon acquire habits of luxury, which promote the crafts and arts ; and this is what is meant by civilization.

This is why you find that cities lying on the periphery of the state, even if they be populous, are less civilized and are close to the nomadic stage, unlike those lying in the centre of the country, near the metropolis and seat of government. And this is due to the proximity of the King, whose expenditure flows like water, fertilizing all that it touches. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 250]

¹ Compare Ibn Khaldun's remarks on the importance of the court as a market with those of Lewis Mumford in *The Culture of Cities and Technics and Civilization*.

EFFECTS OF STATE EXPENDITURE ON THE NATIONAL INCOME AND TAX RECEIPTS

A decrease in the expenditure of the King leads to a decrease in the amount collected in taxation. The reason for this is that the State and the court represent the greatest market for the world and continued increase of civilization. Should the King, therefore, hoard the sums derived from taxation or otherwise, or should he not have any money to spend, the amount of money in the hands of his courtiers and officials would decrease, as would also the amount available for their retainers and dependents. Their expenditure would consequently fall off, and, as they constitute the most important group of buyers, business would slacken and the profits of traders would diminish ; tax revenue must necessarily, also contract, for taxes are levied principally on transactions, market purchases, and profits. The State will suffer, owing to the diminution of taxation. . . .

Wealth, then, keeps on circulating between the King and his subjects, from him to them and from them to him. If, therefore, the King should hold back money, the loss would fall on the subjects.

[Vol. II, p. 92].

CHAPTER FIVE. POPULATION

A LARGE POPULATION CREATES WEALTH

Differences in income and market prosperity between districts and towns are due to differences in population. This is because, as is known and has been shown, a single individual is incapable of satisfying his needs by himself, but must co-operate with other members of society. The product of such co-operative labour will exceed by far the needs of the group. Thus, in the production of wheat, for example, we do not see each individual providing for his own needs ; rather, we see six or ten persons co-operating : a blacksmith, a carpenter to repair the tools ; an ox-tender, a man to plough the soil, and another to reap the grain ; and so forth for the different kinds of agricultural work, each man specializing in one operation.

The result of such co-operative labour is to produce a quantity of food which is sufficient for many times the number of persons engaged in the work ; co-operative labour more than satisfies the needs of those engaged in it. Consequently, when the inhabitants of a district or town devote their efforts to providing necessities, they find out that they need only part of their labour for that purpose ; the rest of their labour is available for the production of luxuries, or goods required by the inhabitants of other districts and exchanged with them for goods of equal value imported from these other districts—all of which leads to riches.

And, as will be shown in Chapter Five dealing with gains and incomes, incomes represent the value of labour expended ; if, therefore, much labour is used, its total value rises. Consequently, the income of such a community will necessarily rise,

and prosperity will soon lead to luxury and refinement in matters of housing, household equipment, dress, servants, mounts, etc. Now the demand for such things attracts men skilled in their production ; this leads to prosperity in such crafts and services, higher incomes for those engaged in them, and a rise in the income and expenditure of the whole community.

This increase in prosperity leads to a further increase in economic activity which leads to a rise in incomes and increasing luxury, the new wants so created will lead to the creation of new industries and services, with consequent increases in income and prosperity. And this process can go on two or three times, because all the new activities minister to luxury, unlike the original activities which ministered to necessities.¹ . . .

Thus the inhabitants of a more populous city are more prosperous than their counterparts in a less populous one : the judge in the former being better off than the judge in the latter ; the trader, than the trader ; the craftsman, than the craftsman ; the man in the street, than the man in the street ; the prince, than the prince ; and the policeman, than the policeman.

Compare in Morocco, for instance, the condition of Fez with that of other towns such as Bougie, Tilmisan, Ceuta : the difference between them is great, both in general conditions and in the conditions of the members of each calling. Thus judges in Fez are better off than those in Tilmisan, and so on for each occupation. Similarly Tilmisan is better off than Oran and Algiers, which in turn are better off than smaller towns, until we get to hamlets where all activity is concentrated on necessities only,

¹ Perhaps Ibn Khaldun means here to stress the fact that consumption of non-essentials can be indefinitely expanded, while their production can be increased so long as there is surplus labour not engaged in the production of necessities.

leaving no surplus. The fundamental cause of this is the difference in the nature of the occupations carried on in the different places. For each town is a market for different kinds of labour, and each market absorbs a total expenditure proportionate to its size. . . .

This comes out even in the conditions of the poor, nay, even the beggars : for beggars in Fez are better off than those in Tilmisan or Oran. Thus I have seen, in Fez, on the Day of Sacrifices,¹ beggars asking for enough to buy themselves an animal ; I have also seen them asking for such luxury articles and foods as meat, butter, spices, clothes, or utensils like sieves and vessels. Should such requests be made in Tilmisan or Oran they would be met with rebuke.

And to-day we hear wonderful stories about the opulence and luxury of Cairo and Egypt, stories which lead many poor Moroccans to emigrate to Egypt in search of gain. The popular belief is that this is due to the greater generosity of the inhabitants of that country, or to the hidden treasures of Egypt. Now this is not so, the real cause being that Egypt, and Cairo, are more populous than our own lands. . . . All this is because a larger population, with the consequent increase in incomes, makes it easier to be generous to those who ask.

The position is illustrated by the different conditions of animals in the various houses of the same town. Thus the courts of the houses of the opulent are full of scattered grains and crumbs of food, hence they are crowded with swarms of ants and insects and attract many rats and cats, while birds flock overhead and go away replete. The homes of the humble and poor, on the other hand, whose means of support are scanty, do not contain

¹ 'Id el Udha—celebrated by the sacrifice of animals at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

so much as a mouse. . . . The crowding of men in cities corresponds to the swarming of animals in these houses. The crumbs represent the odd bits of income which can be picked from those who can afford to drop them because of the abundance of their wealth.

Know, then, that the standard of living and wealth of a society will depend on the number of its members.

[Vol. II, p. 234]

. . . Do you not see how, in thinly populated districts, opportunities for work are few or non-existent, and incomes low, because of the scarcity of human activities ? . . . Even springs and rivers cease to flow [in countries whose population has declined] for the overflow of springs is helped by the drawing of water, which is a human act—just as the udders of animals are developed by milking. If, then, there should be no more drawing out, the spring will slacken and dry up, like the udders of an animal. This can clearly be seen in countries which enjoyed much water in the days when they supported a large population ; when, however, destruction overtook them the springs dried up,¹ as though they had never been.²

[Vol. II, p. 275]

¹ When writing these lines Ibn Khaldun had perhaps in mind the ruined Roman wells and cisterns which dot the North African, as they dot the Syrian, desert.

² Ibn Khaldun, however, grasps the reciprocal nature of the relations between wealth and population. If an increase in population, by permitting a greater degree of division of labour, can increase wealth, greater wealth can lead to a larger population. Thus he states that "a good government, by encouraging industries, can increase its population and augment its revenue".

ECONOMIC AND HYGIENIC FACTORS AFFECTING
THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION

... If the rule of the state is lenient and beneficent (as is the case in its early stages), subjects become more confident and show more energy and enterprise in several matters and the birth-rate rises. All this takes place gradually, so that the effects make themselves felt only after at least one or two generations.

Now by the end of two generations, when the population has attained its maximum size and rate of growth, the state is approaching the end of its natural age. (And do not object that we declared earlier that the end of the state is marked by oppression and misrule : that is true but does not contradict our present statement, for the oppression which takes place at that stage and the decrease in revenues will affect the size of the population only after some time, its effect being also gradual, as with all natural phenomena.)

Famine and deaths begin to increase towards the end of the state. Famines increase because many people begin to give up cultivation owing to the increased burden of taxation and the insecurity of property ; owing also to the widespread rebellions and troubles springing from the weakness of the state, which reduce the numbers of the population—so that stocks of agricultural produce begin to fall. For the quantity and quality of agricultural produce do not remain at the same level, but vary with the quantity of rain, which fluctuates widely. Men, however, secure their subsistence by storing fruits and agricultural and dairy produce ; hence any falling off in the amount of stocks will lead to expectations of famine and a rise in the prices of agricultural produce, which puts them out of reach of the poor, who may therefore perish. And in certain years stocks disappear altogether, so that famine becomes widespread.

As for deaths, their number rises because of more frequent famines, as we have said, or because of widespread insecurity arising out of the weakness of the state and producing disorders and murders ; or because of epidemics. The commonest cause of epidemics is the pollution of the air resulting from a denser population which fills it with corruption and dank moisture. . . .

That is why we mentioned, elsewhere, the wisdom of leaving open, empty spaces in built-up areas, in order that the winds may circulate, carrying away all the corruption produced in the air by animals and bringing in their place fresh, clean air. And this is the reason why the death rate is highest in populous cities, such as Cairo in the East and Fez in the West.

[Vol. II, p. 124]

MORAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION

A people which is defeated and subjugated by another soon disappears. The cause of this is (and God knows best) the indolence that overcomes the soul of a people which is subjugated and becomes dependent on others, nay a tool in their hands. Hope sinks and procreation diminishes, for procreation is stimulated by high hopes and the resulting heightening of animal energies. If, therefore, conditions are unfavourable and indolence overcomes hopefulness, while solidarity has been weakened by defeat, numbers fall off, incomes decrease, enterprise slackens, and people become unable to defend themselves owing to the fact that defeat has broken their spirit. They then become the prey of every aggressor, even if, in the past, they had enjoyed imperial power over others.¹

¹ Ibn Khaldun has probably grasped an important cause of the falling off in the birth-rate towards the close of a civilization, for example in the later Roman Empire, viz. a general loss of interest and hopefulness.

The same thing may be put differently by saying that man is (and God knows best) masterful by nature, owing to the rule given to him by God over creation. Now a master who has been deprived of his rule and prevented from attaining the objects of his power will not even take the trouble to take his fill of food and drink, and this is a human trait. The same may be said of beasts of prey, which do not copulate when they are held in captivity, their numbers decline until the species finally disappears.

An illustration is provided by the Persians, who had filled the earth and of whom huge numbers remained even after the annihilation of their army by the Arabs. . . . When they were subjugated by the Arabs their numbers fell and they soon disappeared as though they had never been. And do not suppose that this was due to their having been oppressed or persecuted, for the justice of the rule of Islam is known. Nay it is due to the very nature of man when coerced and forced to obey another's will.

This is why, as we said before, the only people who accept slavery are the Negroes, owing to their low degree of humanity and their proximity to the animal stage. Other persons who accept the status of slave do so as a means of attaining high rank, or power, or wealth, as is the case with the Mameluke Turks in the East and with those Franks and Galicians¹ who enter the service of the state [i.e. the Arab state in Spain].

[Vol. I, p. 268]

¹ The reference is to Galicia in the north-west corner of Spain, not to the central European region of that name.

CHAPTER SIX. SOCIETY AND STATE

ORIGINS OF SOCIETY

HUMAN society is necessary. Philosophers express this truth by saying that man is social by nature, i.e. he needs a society, or city as they call it.

The reason for this is that . . . each individual's capacity for acquiring food falls short of what is necessary to sustain life. Even taking a minimum, such as one day's supply of wheat, it is clear that this requires operations (grinding and kneading and baking) each of which necessitates utensils and tools, which presuppose the presence of carpenters, smiths, potmakers, and other craftsmen. Even granting that he eat the wheat unground, he can only obtain it in that state after many more operations, such as sowing and reaping and threshing, to separate the grain from the chaff, all of which processes require even more tools and crafts.

Now it is impossible for an individual to carry out all the above-mentioned work, or even part of it. Hence it becomes necessary for him to unite his efforts with those of his fellow men who by co-operating can produce enough for many times their number.

Similarly each individual needs the help of his fellow men for the purposes of defence. For God . . . gave to many brute beasts more power than to man. Thus the horse, the ass and the bull are more powerful than man, while the lion and elephant are many times as strong. And whereas enmity is natural between animals, He gave to each kind an organ of self-defence. To man, however, He gave the mind and the hand which, in the service of the mind, can apply itself to the

crafts and produce tools which take the place of the natural organs with which other animals are endowed for self-defence. Thus spears replace horns ; swords, claws ; shields, thick hides ; and so forth, as was mentioned by Galen in his book on the uses of the organs.

But an individual human being cannot resist an animal, especially a beast of prey, nor is his tool-using capacity of any avail unless he join with his fellow men, for he cannot, unaided, make the many tools needed. And unless he so co-operate with others he cannot obtain the food without which he cannot live, nor defend himself, for want of weapons, but will fall a prey to the beasts and his species will be extinct. Co-operation however, secures both food and weapons, thus fulfilling God's will of preserving the species. Society is therefore necessary to man . . . and it is society which forms the subject of this science. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 68]

ORIGINS OF THE STATE

. . . Human society having, as we have shown, been achieved and spread over the face of the earth, there arises the need of a restraining force to keep men off each other in view of their animal propensities for aggressiveness and oppression of others. Now the weapons with which they defend themselves against wild beasts cannot serve as a restraint, seeing that each man can make equal use of them. Nor can the restraint come from other than men, seeing that animals fall far short of men in their mental capacity. The restraint must therefore be constituted by one man, who wields power and authority with a firm hand and thus prevents anyone from attacking anyone else, i.e. by a sovereign. Sovereignty is therefore peculiar to man, suited to his nature and indispensable to his existence.

According to certain philosophers, Sovereignty may also be found in certain animal species, such as bees and locusts, which have been observed to follow the leadership of one of their species, distinguished from the rest by its size and form. But in animals Sovereignty exists in virtue of instinct and divine providence, not of reflection aiming at establishing a political organization. . . .

It is maintained by some that rule can be founded on a Divine Law, commanded by God and revealed by Him to a man whom He has so endowed with outstanding qualities that other men willingly and unfeigningly obey him and surrender themselves to him. But this proposition cannot be demonstrated: for human society can exist without such a Divine Law, merely in virtue of the authority imposed by one man or of the Social Solidarity which compels the others to follow and obey him. And it is clear that the People of the Book¹ and those who have followed the teachings of the prophets are few in comparison with the pagans,² who do not have a book and who constitute a majority of the inhabitants of the world. And yet these pagans have not only lived but have founded states and left monuments. And until this day they form societies in the extreme northern and southern zones. Their condition is therefore not one of anarchy, i.e. of men left to themselves without restraint, for such a condition cannot possibly exist. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 71]

STATE AND SOCIETY

. . . The state is therefore to society as form is to matter, for the form by its nature preserves the matter and, as philosophers have shown, the two are inseparable.

¹ I.e. those with revealed religions: Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

² Literally "Magians".

For a state is inconceivable without a society ; while a society without a state is wellnigh impossible, owing to the aggressive propensities of men, which require a restraint. A polity therefore arises, either theocratic or kingly, and this is what we mean by state.

The two being inseparable, any disturbance in either of them will cause a disturbance in the other ; just as the disappearance of one leads to the disappearance of the other. The greatest source of disturbance is in the breakdown of such empires as the Roman, Persian, or Arab ; or in [the breakdown of a whole] dynasty, such as the Omayyad or Abbaside.

Individual rulers, such as Heraclius, or Anushirvan,¹ or 'Abdel Malik Ibn Marwan,² or Harun al Rashid, are merely successive rulers and guardians of society. The succession of such rulers does not affect society greatly for they resemble each other closely. Moreover the real force which operates on society is solidarity and power, which persists through [successive] rulers. Should such a solidarity disappear, and be replaced by another solidarity which acts on society, the whole Ruling Class would disappear and the disturbance thus caused be very great. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 264]

POLITICAL SANCTIONS

. . . We have already refuted the view [declaring that no society can be constituted without a Divine Law revealed by a

¹ Chosroes I (541-79), known as Anushirvan (the Blessed), the greatest of the Sassanian kings, is equally famous as a conqueror, an administrator and a patron of learning.

² 'Abdel Malik (reigned 685-705) consolidated the power of the Omayyad dynasty, began the conquest of Transoxania and carried out important internal reforms. The Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosque, at Jerusalem, were built by his architects.

prophet]. For one of the premises of this view is that a Sanction can only be provided by a Divine Law which is blindly obeyed by all because of their faith. Now this is false, for a sanction can be provided by the power of the king, or of a ruling group,¹ without there being any Divine Law—as took place, for instance, among the pagans² who did not have a Revelation or Sacred Book.

Nay, conflict may stop if every person is clearly aware, *by the light of his reason*, that he has no right to oppress his neighbour. . . . Oppression and strife might therefore cease . . . if men undertook to restrain themselves. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 345]

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY IS BASED ON KINSHIP

Social solidarity is found only in groups related by blood ties or by other ties which fulfil the same functions. This is because blood ties have a force binding on most men, which makes them concerned with any injury inflicted on their next of kin. Men resent the oppression of their relatives, and the impulse to ward off any harm that may befall those relatives is natural and deep rooted in men.

If the degree of kinship between two persons helping each other is very close, it is obviously the blood tie, which, by its very evidence, leads to the required solidarity. If the degree of kinship is distant, the blood tie is somewhat weakened but in its place there exists a family feeling based on the widespread knowledge of kinship. Hence each will help the other for fear of the dishonour which would arise if he failed in his duties towards one who is known by all to be related to him.

¹ Literally “the compulsion of a power”, i.e. of a powerful group of men.

² Literally “Magians”.

The clients and allies of a great nobleman often stand in the same relationship towards him as his kinsmen. Patron and client are ready to help each other because of the feeling of indignation which arises when the rights of a neighbour, a kinsman, or a friend are violated. In fact, the ties of clientship are almost as powerful as those of blood.

'This explains the saying of the Prophet Mohammad, "Learn your genealogies to know who are your near of kin", meaning that kinship only serves a function when blood ties lead to actual co-operation and mutual aid in danger—other degrees of kinship being insignificant. The fact is that such relationship is more of an emotional¹ than an objective fact in that it acts only by bringing together the hearts and affections of men. If the kinship is evident it acts as a natural urge leading to solidarity ; if it is based on the mere knowledge of descent from a common ancestor it is weakened and has little influence on the sentiments and hence little practical effect.

[Vol. I, p. 235]

Ties of kinship come out most clearly among savage peoples living in wildernesses, such as the Beduins and other like peoples. This is because of the peculiarly hard life, poor conditions and forbidding environment which necessity has imposed upon such peoples. For their livelihood is based upon the produce of camels, and camel breeding draws them out into the wilderness where the camels graze on the bushes and plants of the desert sands ; as we mentioned earlier.

Now the wilderness is a hard and hungry home, to which such men adapted their nature and character in successive generations. Other peoples, however, do not try to go out into the desert or to live with the nomads and share their fate ;

¹ Literally "imaginary".

nay, should a nomad see the possibility of exchanging his condition for another he would not fail to do so.

As a result of all this, the genealogies of nomads are in no danger of being mixed or confused but remain clear and known to all. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 236]

PROXIMITY AND A COMMON LIFE AS THE BASIS OF SOLIDARITY

. . . Clientship and the mixing with slaves and allies can replace kinship [as the basis of solidarity]. For although kinship is natural and objective it is also emotional.¹ For group ties are formed by such things as living together, companionship, prolonged acquaintance or friendship, growing up together, having the same foster parents, and other such matters of life and death. Such ties once formed lead to mutual help and the warding off of injuries inflicted on others ; as can be commonly seen to occur. An example of this is provided by the relation of dependence. For there arises a special tie between a patron and those in his service which draws them close together so that although kinship is absent the fruits of kinship are present. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 332]

SOLIDARITY IN TRIBES

. . . Aggressiveness and the lust for power are common characteristics of men, and whenever a man's eye dwells on the goods of his neighbour his hand is apt to follow it, unless he be checked by some restraint. . . .

As regards towns and villages, their mutual aggressiveness is checked by the governors and the State, which restrain their

¹ Literally "imaginary".

subjects from attacking or oppressing each other ; in other words, the power of the rulers preserves the people from oppression, unless it be the oppression of those same rulers. External aggression, for its part, is warded off by means of walls and fortifications, which protect a city by night, prevent surprises, and moreover supplement an otherwise inadequate defence ; while the garrisons of the State carry out a prepared and prolonged resistance.

In nomadic societies, intragroup aggressiveness is checked by the chiefs and elders, owing to the prestige and respect with which they are regarded by the tribesmen. Aggression from outside, aimed at their possessions, is warded off by those of their young men who are noted for their bravery. And such defence can succeed only when they are united by a strong social solidarity arising out of kinship, for this greatly increases their strength. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 233]

TRANSITION FROM TRIBAL TO VILLAGE AND CITY LIFE AND CONSEQUENT WEAKENING OF SOLIDARITY

. . . The above [i.e. purity of race and tribal solidarity] holds true only for *nomadic* Arabs. The caliph Omar said : "Learn your genealogies and be not like the Nabateans of Mesopotamia who, if asked about their origin reply : 'I come from such and such a village.'" Those Arabs who took up a more sedentary life, however, found themselves, in their quest for more fertile lands and rich pastures, crowding in on other peoples—all of which led to a mixture [of blood] and a confusion of genealogies.

This is what happened at the beginning of the Muslim era,

when men began to be designated by the localities [in which they dwelt]. Thus people would refer to the military province of Qinnasrin¹ or the military province of Damascus or that of al 'Awasim.² The usage then spread to Spain.

This does not mean, however, that the Arabs were no longer designated by their genealogies ; they merely added to their tribal name a place-name which allowed their rulers to distinguish between them more easily. Later on, however, further mixture took place, in the cities, between Arabs and non-Arabs. This led to a complete confusion of genealogies, and a consequent weakening of that solidarity which is the fruit of tribal kinship ; hence tribal names tended to be cast aside. Finally, the tribes themselves were absorbed and disappeared and with them all traces of tribal solidarity.

The nomads, however, continued as they had always been. "And God shall inherit the earth and all that are upon it."

[Vol. I, p. 237]

SOLIDARITY IN CITIES

It is evident that men are by nature in contact with and tied to each other, even where kinship is absent ; though, as we have said before, in such cases such ties are weaker than where they are reinforced by kinship. Such contact may produce a solidarity nearly as powerful as that produced by kinship.

¹ The town of Qinnasrin, in northern Syria, was chosen as the centre of a military province including Aleppo and Antioch. Very prosperous during the first few centuries of Arab rule, it was gradually devastated and ruined by the Byzantine wars of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

² The fortified "marches" of northern Syria, stretching along the Taurus mountains, were originally included in the province of Qinnasrin. Under Harun al Rashid a special province was set up, under the name of al 'Awasim (the fortifications), extending from Tarsus to the Euphrates.

Now many city dwellers are interrelated by marriage, thus forming groups of kinsmen, divided into parties and factions, between which there exist the same relations of friendship and enmity as exist between tribes. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 267]

SOLIDARITY IS THE BASIS OF SOVEREIGNTY

The end of social solidarity is sovereignty. This is because, as we have said before, it is solidarity which makes men unite their efforts for common objects, defend themselves, and repulse or overcome their enemies. We have also seen that every human society requires a restraint, and a chief who can keep men from injuring each other. Such a chief must command a powerful support, else he will not be able to carry out his restraining function. The domination he exercises is Sovereignty, which exceeds the power of a tribal leader; for a tribal leader enjoys leadership¹ and is followed by his men whom he cannot however compel. Sovereignty, on the other hand, is rule by compulsion, by means of the power at the disposal of the ruler.

[Now rulers always strive to increase their power],² hence a chief who secures a following will not miss the chance of transforming, if he can, his rule into sovereignty; for power is the desire of men's souls. And sovereignty can be secured only with the help of the followers on whom the ruler relies to secure the acquiescence of his people, so that kingly sovereignty is the final end to which social solidarity leads. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 252]

¹ Literally "mastery".

² The sentence in brackets is omitted in Quatremère's edition and has been taken from the Beirut-Cairo edition.

SOLIDARITY IS THE BASIS OF KINGSHIP

Kingship and dynasties can be founded only on popular support and solidarity. The reason for this is, as we have seen before, that victory, or even the mere avoidance of defeat, goes to the side which has most solidarity and whose members are readiest to fight and to die for each other. Now kingship is an honoured and coveted post, giving its holder all worldly goods as well as bodily and mental gratifications. Hence it is the object of much competition and is rarely given up willingly, but only under compulsion. Competition leads to struggle and wars and the overthrow of thrones, none of which can occur without social solidarity.

Such matters are usually unknown to, or forgotten by, the masses, who do not remember the time when the dynasty was first established, but have grown up, generation after generation, in a fixed spot, under its rule. They know nothing of the means by which God set up the dynasty ; all they see is their monarchs, whose power has been consolidated and is no longer the object of dispute and who do not need to base their rule any more on social solidarity. They do not know how matters stood at first and what difficulties were encountered by the founders of the dynasty. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 278]

ONCE THE STATE IS ESTABLISHED, SOLIDARITY BECOMES SUPERFLUOUS

Once consolidated the state can dispense with social solidarity. The reason is that newly founded states can secure the obedience of their subjects only by much coercion and force. This is because the people have not had the time to get accustomed to the new and foreign rule.

Once kingship has been established, however, and inherited by successive generations or dynasties, the people forget their original condition, the rulers are invested with the aura of leadership, and the subjects obey them almost as they obey the precepts of their religion, and fight for them as they would fight for their faith. At this stage the rulers do not need to rely on a great armed force, since their rule is accepted as the will of God, which does not admit of change or contradiction. It is surely significant that the discussion of the Imamate¹ is inserted [in theological books] at the end of the discussion of doctrinal beliefs, as though it formed an integral part of them.

From this time onward the authority of the king is based on the clients and freedmen of the royal household, men who have grown up under its protection ; or else the king relies on foreign bands of warriors whom he attaches to himself.

An example of this is provided by the Abbaside dynasty. By the time of the Caliph Al Mu'tasim² and his son Al Wathiq,³ the spirit and strength of the Arabs had been weakened, so that the kings relied mainly on clients recruited from Persians, Turks, Deylamites, Seljuks, and others. These foreigners soon came to control the provinces, the Abbasides' rule being confined to the neighbourhood of Baghdad. Then the Deylamites marched on Baghdad and occupied it, holding the Caliphs under their rule. They were succeeded by the Seljuks, who were followed by the Tatars, who killed the Caliph and wiped out that dynasty. . . .

The same is true of the Omayyad dynasty in Spain. When

¹ See below, page 134, footnote 1.

² Al Mu'tasim (795/6 or 796/7-842) succeeded his brother Al Mamun. He is remembered chiefly for his removal of the court from Baghdad to the newly founded Samarra.

³ Died A.D. 847.

the spirit and solidarity of the Arabs weakened, the feudal lords pounced on the kingdom and divided it up among themselves. Each of them set himself up as supreme lord in his region and, following the example of the foreigners in the Abbaside empire, usurped the emblems and titles of sovereignty. . . . They upheld their authority by means of clients and freedmen and with the help of tribesmen recruited from the Berbers, Zenata¹ and other North Africans. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 279]

OPPOSITION OF TRIBES AND BANDS

It is rare that a state can be securely established in lands inhabited by many tribes and bands. The reason is that in such lands there will be a diversity of opinions and inclinations, each opinion or viewpoint being backed by a social solidarity to which it can appeal for protection. Defections and rebellions against the state then become frequent, even though the state itself be based on some solidarity, because each tribe feels itself secure and powerful.

Consider, for instance, what has been happening in North Africa and in Morocco from the Islamic conquest until to-day. The Berber inhabitants of these lands being grouped in well-knit tribes, the first conquests effected by Ibn Abi Sarh² over them and the Franks were of no avail; for they repeatedly

¹ Zenata was one of the two main Berber branches, Sanhaja being the other. The Zenata, mostly nomadic, inhabited the southern parts of Algeria and Morocco. They played an important part in the history of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries and founded the Marinid kingdom of Fez.

² Appointed as governor of Egypt in A.D. 645, 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh helped to pacify the country and led the expedition which conquered Tripolitania and Tunisia.

rose in revolt and recanted the Muslim faith, killing large numbers of Muslims. And even when the Muslim religion had been firmly planted in these lands, they persisted in revolting and rebelling and in adopting the heterodox beliefs of the Kharijites.¹ According to Ibn Abi Zaid,² "The Berbers of Morocco recanted Islam twelve times, that religion not being firmly established until the governorship of Musa Ibn Nusair,³ or even later." This explains the reported saying of Omar that "North Africa divided the hearts of its inhabitants". By this saying he meant that the great number of tribes and bands leads them to refuse obedience and reject leadership.

Iraq and Syria, at that time, were in a very different state, the garrisons consisting of Persian or Byzantine troops, and the masses, of spiritless city dwellers. Hence, once the Muslims had defeated these garrisons and wrested the land from the rulers, they encountered no further resistance or difficulty. The Berbers of Morocco, on the other hand, are organized in innumerable, well-knit, tribes, all of them nomadic; hence no sooner is one tribe wiped out than another takes its place as a rebel and renegade, which explains the length of time it took the Arabs to establish themselves in North Africa and Morocco. This too was the position of Syria at the time of the Israelites. For the land was full of the tribes of the Canaanites, the Philistines, the children of Esau, the Midianites, the children of Lot, the Edomites, the Armenians, the Amalekites, the Gergashites, and, in the direction of Arabia and Mossul,

¹ A dissident, radical Muslim sect which played a prominent part in the early years of the Caliphate.

² Ibn Abi Zaid (922/3-996), a jurist of the Malikite rite who wielded much influence in his native city of Qairawan, in Tunisia.

³ Musa Ibn Nusair (640-716/7) extended and consolidated Muslim rule in North Africa and initiated and completed the conquest of Spain.

the Nabateans—an innumerable and diverse host of cohesive peoples. This made it very difficult for the Israelites to establish and secure their rule, as they had to face one disturbance after another. Nay, this state of unrest communicated itself to them, leading to factions and rebellions against their kings. Nor did they enjoy a secure, firm state during the rest of their history ; being eventually conquered by the Persians, then by the Greeks, then by the Romans, and were finally dispersed in the Diaspora.

The position is just the reverse in countries where there are no cohesive tribes ; for there it is easy to establish a state because, owing to the lack of disturbances and defections, the king can without difficulty restrain the inhabitants and secure the state without much solidarity on his side. Examples are provided by Egypt and Syria to-day, which are inhabited by sedentary people. Indeed Syria, which was a breeding ground of tribes and bands, is devoid of them to-day. In Egypt the state is very well established and meets only with docility, in view of the rareness of rebellions and opposing bands. It consists of a Sultan and his subjects, and rests on the armed bands of the Turkish feudal princes. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 295]

NATURE OF KINGSHIP

Kingship is a position natural to mankind. For, as we have shown, men can exist and survive only if they live in groups and co-operate in their search for food and the other necessities of life. Now congregation for the satisfaction of needs implies intercourse, which means that owing to the animal propensities of aggressiveness and oppression each will help himself to the possessions of his fellows. The person so attacked will hit back, spurred by pride and anger and enabled to do so by the

strength he shares with other human beings. All this leads to quarrels and strife, which provoke unrest, bloodshed, and the loss of life, endangering the survival of the species whose preservation is willed by God Himself.

It is, therefore, impossible for men to survive in a state of anarchy, without a sanction which restrains them from mutual aggression. This sanction is provided by a ruler, who is, by the very force of human nature, a strong and masterful king. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 337]

CONCENTRATION OF AUTHORITY

It is of the nature of states that authority¹ becomes concentrated in one person. This is because, as we have said before, a state is founded upon solidarity. Now solidarity is formed by the union of many groups, one of which, being more powerful than the rest, dominates and directs the others and finally absorbs them, thus forming an association which ensures victory over other peoples and states. . . .

This wider union and solidarity will be achieved by some group belonging to a leading family; and within that family there is bound to be some prominent individual who leads and dominates the rest. That person will therefore be appointed as leader of the wider group, because of the domination enjoyed by his house over the others.

And once this leader is so appointed, his animal nature is bound to breed in him feelings of pride and haughtiness. He will then disdain to share with any one his rule over his followers; nay, he will soon think himself a God, as human beings are wont to do. Add to this the fact that sound politics, demands undivided rule, for where there are many leaders the

¹ Reading "mulk" (as in the Beirut-Cairo edition) for "majd".

result is confusion, and if there were other gods than God in the universe, there would be chaos.

Steps are therefore taken to curb the power and to clip the wings and weaken the solidarity of the other groups, so that they shall not aspire to dispute the power of the ruler. The ruler monopolizes all power, leaving nothing to others, and enjoys alone the glory derived therefrom.

And this process may be achieved by the first king of the dynasty, or it may only come about under the second or the third, according to the power and resistance offered by the groups ; but come about it certainly must.

[Vol. I, p. 299]

NEED OF THE KING FOR A BUREAUCRACY

KNOW then that the King by himself is a feeble creature, on whom a very heavy burden is laid and who consequently needs the help of his fellow men. For if he needs their help in securing his livelihood and the necessities of life, how much more, then, does he need it in governing a society of human beings !

He whom God has chosen as a ruler must protect his community from external aggression, preserve order, and enforce the laws, in order to prevent the encroachment by any one on the rights of others. He must protect property by making the highways secure. He must seek to promote the interest of his subjects and hence, in order to facilitate transactions and make it easier for his subjects to earn their livelihood, inspect foodstuffs, weights, and measures, to prevent adulteration or fraud. He must, too, test the coinage which they use, in order to prevent counterfeiting. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 1]

CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE
BUREAUCRACY

KNOW then that the ruler requires both a civilian and a military establishment to aid him in carrying on with the affairs of state. At the beginning of a dynasty, when the rulers are consolidating their power, the need for the military is greater than that for a civilian bureaucracy ; for the civilians are mere servants, carrying out the orders of the king, whereas the military are his partners and fellow workers. The same is also true of the period of decline of a dynasty, when old age has weakened social solidarity and caused the population to decrease, as we said before ; in such a case, too, the need for soldiers, for the purposes of defence, makes itself as urgently felt as it had been during the period of consolidation of the state. In both those stages, then, the sword plays a more important part than the pen,¹ and the military enjoy more prestige and wealth, and are granted richer fiefs than the civilians.

During the middle period of the dynasty, on the other hand, the ruler is relatively independent of the military. For, his rule having been established, his main concern is to pick the fruits of domination, such as the collection of taxes, the recording [of income and expenditure], the rivalling [in ostentation] with other sovereigns, and the enforcing of his decrees. Now for all this it is to the [men of the] pen that he must look for help, hence their importance increases. The sword, on the other hand, is left unused in its scabbard, unless it be to meet some unexpected danger or incursion ; otherwise there is no need for it. The civilians, in these circumstances when their services are required, enjoy more prestige, a higher rank in the hierarchy of the state, and more wealth ; it is they whom the king

¹ The sword indicates the military establishment and the pen the civilian.

calls into his councils and consults in his closet ; for it is they whom he needs most if he is to enjoy the fruits of his rule. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 40]

NATURAL AGES OF THE STATE

. . . And the ages of the state, too, may differ according to astronomical conjunctures. Nevertheless, generally speaking, it is rare that the age of the state should exceed three generations, a generation being the average age of an individual, that is forty years or the time necessary for full growth and development. . . .

We said that the age of the state rarely exceeds three generations because the first generation still retains its nomadic roughness and savagery, and such nomadic characteristics as a hard life, courage, predatoriness, and the desire to share glory. All this means that the strength of the solidarity uniting the people is still firm, which makes that people feared and powerful and able to dominate others.

The second generation, however, have already passed from the nomadic to the sedentary way of life, owing to the power they wield and the luxury they enjoy. They have abandoned their rough life for an easy and luxurious one. Instead of all sharing in the power and glory of the state, one wields it alone, the rest being too indolent to claim their part. Instead of aggressiveness and the desire for conquest we see in them contentment with what they have. All this relaxes the ties of solidarity, to a certain extent, and humility and submissiveness begin to appear in them ; yet they still retain much of their pristine spirit because of what they have seen and remembered of the previous generation, with its self-confidence, pursuit of glory, and power to defend and protect itself. They cannot entirely give up all these characteristics, even though they have

abandoned some of them. They still hope to regain the conditions prevailing in the previous generation, or even have the illusion that these virtues are still to be found in them.

As for the third generation, they have completely forgotten the nomadic and rough stage, as though it had never existed. They have also lost their love of power and their social solidarity through having been accustomed to being ruled. Luxury corrupts them, because of the pleasant and easy way of living in which they have been brought up. As a result, they become a liability on the state, like women and children who need to be protected. Solidarity is completely relaxed and the arts of defending oneself and of attacking the enemy are forgotten.

They deceive people by their insignia, dress, horse-riding and culture ; yet all the while they are more cowardly than women. If then a claimant or aggressor appear, they are incapable of pushing him back. Consequently, the head of the state is compelled to rely on others for defence, making extensive use of clients and mercenaries, who may to some extent replace the original free warriors. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 306]

TRANSITION FROM NOMADIC TO SEDENTARY FORMS

. . . The civilized form [of state], then, necessarily succeeds the nomadic one, as domination leads to luxury. For the rulers of a state, once they have become sedentary, always imitate in their ways of living those of the state to which they have succeeded and whose condition they have seen and generally adopted.

This is what happened to the Arabs, when they conquered and ruled over the Persian and Byzantine empires and took

the daughters and sons of the Persians and Byzantines into their service. Up till then they had known nothing of civilization. Thus it is said that when presented with thin loaves of bread¹ they mistook it for parchment, and when they discovered some camphor in the treasure houses of Chosroes they used it as salt in their dough, and did many other similar things. When, however, they had subjugated the populations of the lands they conquered and employed them in their households as servants and craftsmen, choosing the ablest in their different lines, together with their supervisors, they soon learned from them how to change their ways and to make the proper use of things. Nay, they even pushed these things to the point of refinement, especially with the improvement in their mode of living. Indeed, they reached the height of luxury in their way of living, their good food and drink, clothing, houses, arms, furniture, vessels, and household equipment. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 309]

GROWTH OF LUXURY

It is of the nature of states to breed luxury. This is because when a people overcomes and dispossesses the inhabitants of a previously existing state, its wealth and prosperity increase and with them its wants, so that the bare necessities of life no longer satisfy, but only the amenities and luxuries. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 300]

LUXURY AND POWER

Luxury will at first increase the power of a state. This is because when a tribe secures domination and luxury, its birth-rate goes up and the number of its children increases, which provides a

¹ Reading, as in the Beirut-Cairo edition, "muraqqaq" for "muraffaq". In the Near East, bread is often made in the form of very thin wide loaves.

greater supply of armed men. At the same time, the members of the tribe make wider use of clients and dependents. And their children growing up in this atmosphere of prosperity and luxury will further increase and wax stronger because of their greater number of troops.

Once, however, the first and second generations have passed away, and the state has begun to decline, the clients and dependents are incapable of forming a state of their own, independently ; for they never enjoyed independent action, but were always dependent on the rulers, whom they helped ; once, therefore, the trunk has been removed, the branches cannot strike roots for themselves, but wither and pass away. The state, then, cannot retain its former power.

Consider what occurred to the Arab state, in Islam. At the time of the Prophet and the early Caliphs they [i.e. the Muslims] numbered some 150,000 [fighting men], including both Mudarites and Qahtanites¹, as we said before. When, however, luxury began to spread, under the later dynasties, their numbers began to grow with their prosperity. Moreover the Caliphs began to make increasing use of clients and dependents, so that the total rose to many times the above-mentioned figure. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 313]

GROWTH OF DOCILITY

It is of the nature of states to breed docility and inaction. This is because a people can achieve dominion only by strife, which strife leads to victory and the foundation of a state. When these ends are achieved there is an end to strife. . . .

Once, then, they have established their state they no longer make the strenuous efforts which they had previously exerted,

¹I.e. North and south Arabians.

but prefer rest and easy life and inaction. They now seek to enjoy the fruits of power ; such as fine homes and clothes. They build palaces, draw waters to them, plant parks, and show great refinement in their dress, food, furniture and household goods, and, generally speaking, prefer a life of enjoyment to one of exertion. Soon they get accustomed to such a mode of living and transmit it to their descendants. And so the matter goes on increasing until God puts an end to it.

[Vol. I, p. 301]

USE OF CLIENTS AND DEPENDENTS

KNOW, then, that, as we said before, the instrument by which a ruler achieves domination is his own people. For it is they who band about him and give him support ; they who help him put down rebellious ; it is they whom he appoints as ministers and entrusts with the collecting of revenue and the governing of districts. For they are his helpers in victory and his partners in public matters, sharing his work with him.

All this is true of the state in its first stage, as we said before ; in the second stage, however, when the king shows despotic inclinations, monopolizes glory, and keeps his former associates away from it, they become in reality enemies of his. In order, then, to keep them out of public affairs and to prevent their sharing in his power, he has recourse to other, foreign, dependents on whom he can rely for support. These foreigners therefore are nearer to him than are his own people ; it is they whom he keeps close to him and takes into his service ; they on whom he showers favours and honours ; for they are ready to die for him and to help him keep his own people away from the posts which the latter once occupied and from the positions they used to fill in the days when they had their share of power. The

ruler therefore honours and favours his foreign clients . . . and chooses his ministers, governors, generals, and financial agents from among them. And it is they who constitute his closest dependents and his trustiest advisers.

This change heralds the downfall of the state and is a symptom of the grave disease from which it is suffering. For it marks the disappearance of that solidarity which had secured domination ; it also marks the hatred and enmity felt for the king by the original conquerors, who now wait for an opportunity to get rid of him, all of which causes grave harm to the state. This disease is incurable, increasing with time until finally it brings the state to an end.

Consider, as an example, the Omayyad dynasty whose kings relied, for their wars and administration, exclusively on Arabs, such as 'Amr ibn Sa'd. . . .

[At the beginning of the Abbaside dynasty too the king's helpers were also chosen from among the Arabs.]¹ When, however, the kings of that dynasty began to concentrate power in their hands, they began to check the Arabs and to rely on Persian ministers and helpers, such as the Barmecide family . . . and on Turkish clients such as Bagha. . . .

In short, the state soon comes to belong to others than those who founded it, and power passes to others than those who first grasped it.

[Vol. I, p. 330]

THE CONCENTRATION OF AUTHORITY HERALDS THE END OF THE STATE

Once the concentration of power in one person has been achieved and luxury and inaction have spread, the state approaches its decay. This is due to several causes :

¹ The sentence in brackets is omitted in Quatremère's edition.

First because of the concentration of power. For to the extent that glory is equally shared by all the members of a group,¹ they all strive equally for it and make great efforts to overcome others and to defend what they have, spurred on by a collective ambition and force. They all aim at power and find death sweet in the pursuit of glory, and in truth would rather face annihilation than the disruption of their group.

When, however, one man concentrates power in his hands, he tries to curb the wills of the others and destroy their feeling of solidarity ; moreover, he tends to appropriate wealth, excluding them. As a result they become lazy and unwilling to conquer, and soon get accustomed to humiliation and slavery. The second generation is brought up in that atmosphere, regarding the king's gifts to them as rewards for the protection and help they give him, and unable to conceive of any other state of affairs. And it becomes rare to find anyone hiring himself out in a service which may lead to his death.

All this means a weakness in the state and a decrease in its power ; for solidarity is weakened by the loss of these virile qualities and the state approaches its decay.

The *second* reason is that the establishment of a state leads to luxury, as we said before, with an increase in wants and a resulting excess of expenditure over receipts. The poorer among the people die off, while the richer spend all they receive on luxuries. This goes on increasing with successive generations until finally the whole income cannot meet the expenditure to which their habits of luxury have accustomed them, and

¹ Throughout this section, Ibn Khaldun doubtless has in mind the rule established by a conquering people on a subject mass, e.g. The Arabs after the conquest of Syria or Persia. The ruling group can retain its domination only as long as it preserves its solidarity and a rough measure of equality among its members, as well as simplicity of life.

thus they fall in need. When the kings demand that their subjects reduce their expenditure, in times of wars and invasions, the latter are no longer able to do so ; whereupon the kings punish them and confiscate the wealth of many of them, keeping it for themselves or giving it to their own families or officials. All of this weakens [the ruling group] and consequently the power of the ruler himself.

Another possibility is that, as luxury increases and their [i.e. the ruling group] income is unable to meet their expenditure, the king finds himself compelled to increase the allowances he grants them, to enable them to balance their budget and put themselves once more on a sound footing. Now the amount collected in taxation is fixed, showing neither increase nor decrease ; even should new taxes be imposed, the increase would only be limited. If, therefore, the proceeds of taxation are distributed in allowances, and the scale of allowances is raised, because of the greater luxury and the increase in expenditure of the recipients, the number of the armed forces must necessarily be cut down. When this process goes on repeatedly the number of soldiers greatly diminishes, which weakens the protection afforded by them, lowers the power of the state, and emboldens its neighbours, or the tribes and bands in its territory, to rise against it, until finally God decrees for it the extinction which is the lot of all his creatures.

Moreover, luxury corrupts morals, by inducing evil and depraved habits, as will be mentioned in the chapter on civilization. The good qualities of the people, which were a sign of domination, now disappear and are replaced by contrary qualities of evil, which herald decay. The state then begins to decay and totter ; it is visited by grievous and incurable diseases of old age ; finally it passes away.

The *third* reason is that the nature of the state demands docility,

as we mentioned before. Now once men have accustomed themselves to docility and inaction, these qualities develop into a second nature, as with all habits. The younger generations [of the ruling group] are then brought up in luxury, ease and inaction ; the old habits acquired in their free life are shed, and forgotten the nomadic ways which had secured for them dominion, such ways as firmness of character, predatoriness and the capacity of going out and roaming in the wilderness. In short, they become indistinguishable from the subject sedentary masses except for their culture and insignia. Their power is weakened and their value as soldiers decreased, all of which harms the state, causing it further to decay. And so civilization increases, and with it the habits of luxury, docility, and inaction, and the people move ever farther from nomadic roughness and forget the courage they previously had, which enabled them to protect and defend themselves, until they eventually become dependent upon some garrison [of mercenaries], if they should have one. Consider only the history of those states whose records are at hand and you will see the undoubted truth of what I have told you.

And it may well happen, when this luxury and inaction and decay have come about, that the ruler of the state may seek the support of hardy foreign soldiers, who can show themselves more enduring in wartime and better able to bear hunger and rough living. This may preserve the state from decay for a further period of time, until God finally dooms it to extinction.

This is what happens in the Turkish kingdom of the East,¹ most of its soldiers being Turkish slaves. And the kings choose from these imported Mamelukes both their horsemen and their foot soldiers, who show themselves hardier and more enduring than the sons of the Mamelukes who were there before

¹ The Mameluke slave kingdom of Egypt.

them, and who have been brought up in luxury and the shadow of the sultan. This, too, is the case in the kingdom of Al Muwahhidun, in North Africa, where the ruler often chooses his soldiers from among the Zenata and Arabs, leaving out his subjects who are used to luxury. And by this means the state may acquire a new lease of life.

[Vol. I, p. 302]

REFORM OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

. . . The ruler then begins to modify the regulations which have been followed up till then in the military, financial, and provincial administrations. He thinks he can regenerate the state by balancing the budget, reorganizing the army on a sounder basis, reforming the provincial administration, and changing the basis of taxation. With this object in view, he follows faithfully the methods and ordinances which prevailed during the early years of the dynasty.

Yet in spite of all these changes the causes of the evil still persist, threatening the state on all sides. The empire still has to face the same tribulations as before and the ruler to fight against the same difficulties. He makes use of methods which have been tried before, hoping thus to ward off an evil which keeps on returning and threatening the integrity of the empire. Finally, he establishes a new frontier less advanced than the preceding one. But the same disorders which have marked the preceding reigns reappear.

All rulers who change the political regulations observed by their predecessors may be said to found a new kingdom and establish a new empire. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 115]

TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF THE STATE

Each state has its apportioned share of territories which it cannot exceed. The reason for this is that the state must distribute its troops and armed forces among the kingdoms and frontier posts which have been conquered, in order to protect these territories against the enemy, enforce the orders of the state, raise taxes, awe the population, and so on. Once all the troops have been so distributed and there are no reserves left, the state will have attained its limits ; should it then seek to expand further it cannot garrison the newly acquired territories, which are liable to be seized by its enemies or neighbours with a resulting loss of prestige which is harmful to the state. As long, however, as there remain some troops which have not been distributed among the frontiers and provinces, there remains in the state the power to seize what lies beyond its frontiers, until it shall have attained its limits.

The natural explanation of that lies in the force of social solidarity, which is like other natural forces ; for every force gives rise to certain effects.

Now the state is stronger at the centre than at the periphery, weakening at the borders and becoming inoperative outside them, like light rays and beams radiating from a centre, or like circles spreading out on the surface of the water from the point at which it has been impinged upon.

And when old age and weakness overtake a state it begins to contract at the extremities, the centre remaining preserved until God decrees the total extinction of the state, whereupon the centre, too, is wiped out. And should a state be defeated at the centre it is of no avail to it that its provinces should survive ; it will surely be wiped out. For the centre is like the

heart, from which the soul is diffused, and once the heart is seized the extremities are soon overpowered.

Consider the Persian Empire, whose capital was Ctesiphon ; once Ctesiphon had been captured by the Muslims the total power of the Persians was wiped out ; nor were the remaining outlying provinces of any use to Yazdegerd.¹

Consider, on the other hand, the Byzantine Empire whose capital was Constantinople. When the Muslims defeated the Byzantines in Syria and wrested the province from them, they retired unscathed to their capital. Their empire continues at the centre until God shall have decreed its extinction.

Consider, too, the Arabs at the beginnings of the Muslim conquest. Thanks to their numerous troops they quickly overran Syria, Iraq, and Egypt and soon overflowed into Scinde, Abyssinia, Tunisia, and Morocco, and then still further into Spain. They were then dispersed, as garrisons, to the provinces and frontier posts ; as a result they had no further reserves and could not go outside their limits. Nay the borders of the state began to contract, until God decreed its extinction. And this was the fate, too, of the states that followed.

[Vol. I, p. 291]

THE IDEAL RULER

KNOW, then, that the use of the ruler to his subjects² lies not in his person, his fine figure or features, his wide knowledge, his excellent penmanship or the sharpness of his intellect, but solely

¹ Yazdegerd III was the last of the Sassanian kings. After the defeat of his army at Qadesia he fled to the eastern provinces of his empire, where he was murdered in 651.

² Literally "flock", the word commonly used by the Arab and Ottoman caliphs to designate their subjects.

in his *relationship to them*. For kingship and rule are relative terms, implying a certain relation between two objects : the ruler being the possessor of his subjects and the manager of their affairs. The ruler is, then, he who has subjects and the subjects are those who have a ruler, the ruler's relationship to his subjects being one of possession.

If this possession, and the consequences flowing from it, be excellent [i.e. if proper use is made of it] the object of rulership is perfectly fulfilled. For if [the power arising from] possession be applied in a just and beautiful way, the interests of the subjects will be promoted ; if on the other hand it is applied in an evil and oppressive way, the subjects will suffer much harm and may even perish.

Now the excellence of rulership arises out of gentleness. For if the king is harsh, prone to inflict heavy punishments, always searching for the defects of his subjects and enumerating their misdeeds, they will be seized by terror and humiliation and will seek to protect themselves from him by lying, trickery and deceit until these qualities become ingrained in them and ruin their character. They may desert him in wartime, thus imperilling the country or else may conspire to kill him, ruining the state and its defences. And if such a condition should persist, their solidarity will be weakened and with it the very basis of protection of the state.

Should the ruler however be gentle with his subjects and willing to overlook their shortcomings, they will have confidence in him, rely on him for protection, love him, and be prepared to fight unto the death against his enemies, thus bringing about a general improvement in conditions.

As for the requirements of good rule, they are that the ruler defend his subjects and be generous towards them. Defence is indeed the *raison d'être* of rulership, while generosity is one

aspect of the ruler's gentleness towards his subjects and one means by which he can increase their welfare ; it is also one of the chief ways of gaining their affection.

Now it is rare to find gentleness in men who have keen intelligence and awareness ; rather is it to be found among the duller people. For an intelligent ruler is apt to impose upon the subjects more than they can bear, because he sees further than they, and can, thanks to his intelligence,¹ foresee the consequences of any act or event ; all of which spells ruin to the subjects. This is why he [i.e. Mohammad], peace be upon him, said : "Follow the pace of the weakest among you." This is why, also, the Lawgiver does not require excessive² intelligence [in a ruler] . . . for this may lead to oppression, misrule and the driving of the people beyond what they are accustomed to,³ as will be shown at the end of this book, and "God is the best of rulers".

It has thus been shown that intelligence and foresight are defects in a politician, for they represent an excess of thought, just as stupidity is an excess of stolidity. Now in all human qualities both extremes are reprehensible, the mean alone being commendable : thus generosity is the mean between extravagance and niggardliness, and courage between rashness and cowardice, and so on, for other qualities. And that is why those who are extremely intelligent are described as "devils" or "devilish" or something analogous. "And God creates what He pleases and He is the all-knowing and all-powerful".

[Vol. I, p. 341]

¹ Reading "alma'iatahu" for "alma'iah".

² Reading "qillat al ifrat fi", as in the Beirut-Cairo text.

³ Or "beyond the requirements of their nature".

CHAPTER SEVEN. RELIGION AND POLITICS

RELIGION AS THE BASIS OF EMPIRE

Vast and powerful Empires are founded on a religion. This is because dominion can only be secured by victory, and victory goes to the side which shows most solidarity and unity of purpose. Now men's hearts are united and co-ordinated, with the help of God, by participation in a common religion. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 284]

A Religion reinforces the power which a state has already acquired from its solidarity and numbers. This is because, as we mentioned earlier, a religious fervour can efface the competitiveness and envy felt by the members of the group towards each other, and turn their faces towards the truth. When once their eyes have been fixed on the truth, nothing can stand in their way, for their outlook is the same and the object they desire is common to all and is one for which they are prepared to die. The people of the state they are setting out to conquer, on the other hand, however superior in numbers, have different and unworthy goals and are ready to flee for fear of death. Hence the latter will not succeed in resisting the attack, in spite of their numbers, but will soon suffer defeat and annihilation, especially in view of the luxury and oppression prevailing in that country.

This is what happened to the Arabs during the early Muslim conquests, for the Muslim armies at each of the battles of Yarmuk¹

¹ The Yarmuk is a tributary of the Jordan ; the Arab victory over the Byzantines on its banks, in 636, gave them control over practically the whole of Syria.

and Qadesia¹ numbered little over 30,000 men, whereas the Persians numbered at Qadesia 120,000 men, while Heraclius' army, according to al Waqidi, consisted of 400,000 men.² Yet neither of their two opponents was able to stand up against the Arabs, both being defeated.

Consider, too, the dynasties of Lamtuna³ and Al Muwahhidun. There were many tribes in Morocco which rivalled or even surpassed them in numbers and cohesion. Yet their religious fervour, by fixing their eyes on the truth and making them ready to die for it, as we said, so reinforced their solidarity that nothing could stand in their way.

Consider, too, how matters change when the religious fervour begins to weaken and gets corrupted so that religion ceases to play an important part and victory goes to the more cohesive side. A state may then be defeated by those same tribes which it had formerly subjugated, thanks to the power which religion had given it, but which were in fact of equal or superior strength to it because they were more cohesive or nearer the nomadic stage.

This was the case of the Al Muwahhidun and the Zenata ; for the Zenata were more savage and nomadic than the Musamida, yet the latter, by following the Mahdi,⁴ acquired a religious

¹ Qadesia is situated not far from Al Najaf, in Iraq. The Arab victory over the Persians at Qadesia, in 637, gave them the mastery over Iraq and Persia.

² The Arab army at Yarmuk is estimated at 25,000, that of the Byzantines at 50,000 ; at Qadesia the number of Arabs was probably smaller and that of Persians larger.

³ The Lamtuna, one of the subdivisions of Sanhaja, were the veiled tribesmen inhabiting the desert south of Morocco. They constituted the nucleus around which the empire of the Al Muwahhidun was formed.

⁴ The "God Inspired", a title frequently claimed by political or religious leaders in Islam.

fervour which redoubled their strength and enabled them to overthrow and subjugate the Zenata, in spite of Zenata's being more cohesive and nomadic. When, however, the religious fervour of the Musamida began to wane, Zenata rose up against them, defeated them and wrested hegemony from their hands.

[Vol. I, p. 284]

RELIGION AND SOLIDARITY

No religious movement can succeed unless based on solidarity. This is because, as we said before, the masses can only be moved to action in virtue of some solidarity. . . .

Such, too, are those rebels both from jurists and from the masses who rise up to redress wrongs. For many who follow a religious vocation rise up against oppressive rulers, calling for the prohibition of injustice and iniquity and for the injunction of virtue, which God will reward. These leaders soon collect a large following among the rabble and the mob ; and yet they expose themselves to destruction, till most of them are in fact destroyed and get no thanks but only blame, for God did not demand so much of them.

For God demanded only that men should seek to redress those evils which lie in their power. Thus the Prophet said, "If any of you should see iniquity let him change it with his hand : if he cannot, let him change it with his tongue ; and if he cannot do that, either, then let him change it with his heart." ¹

For the power of kings and dynasties is great and deep-rooted and can be shaken and overthrown only by a vigorous attack, supported by the solidarity of a tribe or clan, as we said before.

¹ The end of the quotation, omitted by Ibn Khaldun, runs as follows : "and that shows the weakest faith".

And this was what the Prophets did, peace be upon them, when they spread their teachings among the tribes. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 286]

THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL POWERS ¹

KINGSHIP arises out of the necessary association of human beings and is based on conquest and coercion, which are manifestations of anger and animal tendencies. Hence, the orders of the king, for the most part, deviate from righteousness and are oppressive to the worldly interests of the subjects, on whom are put unbearable burdens in order that the king may gratify his aims and desires, these orders differing according to the different aims of successive kings. It becomes difficult, then, to obey such commands and the consequent rebellions will lead to disorder and loss of life.

It therefore becomes imperative to have recourse to imposed political laws, accepted and followed by the masses, as took place among the Persians and other nations. And no state can establish and consolidate itself without such laws.

Should these laws be laid down by the notables, sages and wise men of the nation, the polity is said to be founded on *reason* : if, however, the laws are those laid down by God, through a religious Lawgiver, the polity rests on a *religious* basis. And such a religious polity is useful both for this and for the after life, for men have not been created solely for this world, which is full of vanity and evil and whose end is death and annihilation. And

¹ The chapter on the Caliphate and Imamate in which Ibn Khaldun discusses the relations between the spiritual and temporal powers, has become the starting point for modern discussions of the problem in Islamic countries ; see, for instance, 'Ali 'Abd el Raziq, *Al Khilafa wa usul al hukm fil Islam*, Cairo, 1925.

God himself has said, " Think you that We have created you in vain ! "

Rather, men have been created for their religion, which leads them to happiness in the after life, and " this is the path of God, who possesses Heaven and Earth ".

Divine laws, then, seek to prescribe the conduct of men in all their affairs, their worship and their dealings, even in those relating to the state, which is natural to human society. The state, therefore, is patterned on religion, in order that the whole should come under the supervision of the Lawgiver.

Those aspects of the state, then, which arise from conquest, coercion, and the letting loose of the force of anger are oppression and aggression and are regarded as blameworthy both by the Lawgiver and by political wisdom. And those aspects that arise from the requirements of statecraft are also blameworthy because they lack the light of God, " and he who does not take God as his light has no light ".

For the Lawgiver knows the interest of the people in matters of the other world, which are beyond their ken. . . . Now political laws reveals to the people only apparent, worldly interests, whereas the object of the Lawgiver is men's salvation in the Hereafter. It is therefore imperative, by the very nature of religious laws, to have the people conform themselves to religious laws in matters concerning both this world and the next. And this authority belongs to the Lawgivers, that is to say, the Prophets, and those who succeed them, i.e. the Caliphs,¹ and this is the meaning of the Caliphate.

Natural *Kingship*, then, involves the ruling of the people according to the aims and *desires* of the ruler. Political action is the ruling of the people according to the dictates of *reason* for the promotion of worldly interests and the warding off of evils.

¹ The word Khalifa in Arabic means Successor.

The *Caliphate* is the ruling of the people according to the insight of religious dictates in other-worldly matters as well as in worldly matters derived from them, for in the eyes of the Lawgiver all worldly matters must be judged from the angle of the interests of the afterworld.

The Caliphate, therefore, is the succession [by the Khalifa] of the Lawgiver, as guardian of religion and as director of worldly affairs in the light of that religion.

[Vol. I, p. 342]

SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL POWERS IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

EVERY religious community stands in need of a leader who will watch over it, in the absence of its Prophet, and enforce the rules and prescriptions of its religion and be looked upon as his successor. . . .

Moreover, in view of the need for authority in every human grouping and society, a chief is needed who will guide men towards objects which are advantageous to them and will force them to keep away from those things that are harmful. Such chiefs are known as Kings.

Now in the Muslim religion, which is all-inclusive in its appeal¹ and seeks to convert all, by persuasion or by force, the Jihad [Holy War] against infidels is obligatory. Hence, in

¹ Ibn Khaldun may mean that Islam aims at converting the whole world ; if so the contrast he draws between it and Christianity is baseless, since Christianity has also sought to spread itself by persuasion or force. Or he may mean that it seeks to regulate all aspects of life, while Christianity confines itself to spiritual matters. If the latter interpretation be correct, Ibn Khaldun has seized upon one of the most fundamental differences between the two religions and one of the main sources of the divergences between their histories.

Islam, Caliphate and Kingship¹ are conjoined,² in order to unite all efforts towards a common end.

The appeal of religions other than Islam, on the contrary, is not all-inclusive, nor is Holy War permissible for their adherents except in self-defence. Hence their religious leaders do not concern themselves with political affairs, but leave the temporal power in the hands of men who have seized it by chance or for some reason with which religion has nothing to do. Sovereignty exists among such peoples owing to social solidarity, as we said before ; their religion as such, however, does not impose any sovereignty on them seeing that it does not demand of them dominion over other peoples, as is the case with Islam, but merely the establishing of their faith among themselves. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 415]

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER INTO A TEMPORAL ONE

KINGSHIP is the natural end to which social solidarity leads. And this transformation is not a matter of choice but a necessary consequence of the natural order and disposition of things, as we said before. For no laws, religions, or institutions can be effective unless a cohesive group enforce and impose them and without solidarity they cannot be established. Social solidarity is, therefore, indispensable if a nation is to play the rôle which God has chosen for it. . . .

For unless religious laws derive their sanctions from social solidarity they will remain totally inoperative. . . .

You see, therefore, how the Caliphate was transformed into a monarchy. At first [i.e. after the immediate successors of

¹ I.e. the spiritual and temporal powers.

² Reading "ittahadat" for "ittakhadhat".

Mohammad] the rulers behaved like spiritual leaders, in that they enforced the articles of the Faith and for their part observed moral standards in their dealings. The only point of change was that the sanction on which they relied was no longer religion but coercion and social solidarity. This state of affairs continued to prevail until the time of Mu'awia, Marwan, and his son 'Abdel Malik,¹ as also under the first few Abbaside Caliphs, until the time of Harun al Rashid and his sons. After that nothing remained of the Caliphate and spiritual rule but the name, the reality being an absolute kingly rule in which the spirit of domination was indulged in freely, for conquest and for the gratification of desires. This latter condition prevailed under the late Omayyad Caliphs, as well as under the Abbasides under the successors of Al Mu'tasim and Al Mutawakkil.² These kings, however, retained the title of Caliph as long as they had to depend on the support of the Arabs.

Thus, in the two stages described above, Monarchy and Caliphate were intertwined. When, however, the solidarity of the Arabs began to weaken, their numbers to fall off, and their power to decline, a further change took place. Absolute Monarchies grew up in the East,³ under non-Arab rulers, who, because of religious sentiments, recognized the authority and the titles of the Caliphs but who kept the substance of power for themselves. . . .

You have seen, then, that in the first stage [of Muslim history] the Caliphate existed alone, without any monarchy: later on

¹ Mu'awia (died A.D. 680) was the founder of the Omayyad dynasty; Marwan (died 685) and 'Abdel Malik (died 705) were among his most distinguished successors.

² Al Mutawakkil (822-61). The son of al Mu'tasim succeeded his brother al Wathiq as caliph.

³ I.e. the eastern half of the Arab world; Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Arabia.

Caliphate and Monarchy were intertwined and intermixed : finally Monarchy stood out independently of the Caliphate, because it could lean on a power and solidarity distinct from that of the Caliphate.

[Vol. I, p. 364]

CHAPTER EIGHT. KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETY

KNOWLEDGE IS NATURAL TO MANKIND

Knowledge and teaching are natural to human society. This is because man, who shares with the other animals such animal traits as sensation, movement and the need for food and shelter, is distinguished from them by his ability to think. This ability guides him in the pursuit of his livelihood ; in his association, for economic purposes, with his fellow beings ; it guides him in the society which comes into being because of that association ; it also disposes him to accept what the Prophets transmit to him from God and to base his acts on their teachings.¹

[Vol. II, p. 363]

SKILLS AND CRAFTS

A CRAFT is a skill in a practical, intellectual matter ; being practical it is therefore connected with the body and the senses. Now such bodily, sensual skills are acquired in a more perfect and comprehensive way by immediate contact and direct transmission.

A skill may be defined as a deep-rooted quality resulting from the repeated performance of an act until the form of that act is firmly fixed [in the mind] ; and the degree of excellence of the skill will depend on the quality of the model which is being copied. Now it is easier to copy that which is seen than that

¹ This passage is taken from the Beirut-Cairo edition—the corresponding passage in Quatremère's edition being incomplete.

which is heard of or read about ; hence the excellence of a skill acquired by learning will depend on the excellence of the teacher and the method used in teaching as well as on the natural inclinations of the pupil.

Now some crafts are simple and some are complex ; the simple dealing with the necessities of life, and the complex with luxuries. The simple crafts are learned first, because of their simplicity and also because they minister to necessities, which must be first served. But precisely for these reasons the teaching of those crafts is always imperfect, hence the human mind is continually and gradually making new inventions which bring into being new crafts and further improve the old ones ; in other words, it is carrying the possibilities from potentiality to actuality until the full possibilities have been actualized. This process requires a long time and many generations, for such transitions do not take place suddenly, especially in industrial matters. This is why the crafts in the smaller towns are rudimentary, only the simplest kinds being found. When, however, these towns become more civilized, and habits of luxury create a demand for new industries, we see new crafts emerging from potentiality to actuality. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 306]

We have already mentioned that man's rational soul exists in him only potentially. Its emergence from potentiality to actuality comes about only through repeated new experiences and apprehensions derived from the senses ; after this comes an acquired power of theoretical reasoning, until at last it reaches the stage of actual understanding and pure intellect ; at this stage it becomes a spiritual self whose existence is complete.

It follows that every kind of science or speculation will endow

the soul with a particular mentality. Moreover each craft, and the skill ensuing therefrom, will give rise to a scientific body of knowledge based on that skill. Hence a profound experience will strengthen the mind, as will also industrial skills and a highly civilized environment. For a civilization implies the existence of many crafts ; those connected with domestic economy, with intercourse among men and the ensuing training in morals, and with religious observances and obligations. All of these follow fixed patterns and take the form of systematic sciences which serve to develop the mind. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 362]

SKILLS AND SPECIALIZATION

He who has acquired a skill in a craft will rarely excel in another skill. An example of this is provided by tailors. For once a man has mastered a skill in tailoring, so that it sinks deep in him, he will not excel thereafter in carpentry or in building, unless the first skill has not yet sunk deep and coloured his mind. The reason for this is that skills are qualities or colours of the soul, which cannot crowd in together. And those whose minds are in a raw, instinctive state are more disposed to acquire new skills, which they can pick up more easily. When, however, the soul has been coloured by some special skill, and has departed from its instinctive state, the imprint of that skill makes it less apt and less ready to receive fresh ones.

All this is obvious, and can be illustrated by many examples from everyday life. Thus it is rare to find a good craftsman being as skilled in another craft, which he has learned later, as he is in his first skill. Even men of learning, whose skills are mental, are in much the same position ; for those of them who acquire and thoroughly master a skill in some branch of learning will

rarely equally master another branch, but will, except in very exceptional cases,¹ fall short in it. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 315]

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Knowledge increases only where society is flourishing and civilized. This is because, as we said before, the imparting of knowledge is one of the crafts. Now crafts, as we have shown, depend for their increase and excellence on the number of inhabitants of the district and its degree of civilization and opulence. For such crafts are superfluities, which will only be pursued when men have surplus energies not absorbed by the strict pursuance of a livelihood. When necessities have been provided, men pursue those activities which are proper and peculiar to mankind, viz. the crafts and sciences.

And should a country-born youth, or one brought up in an uncivilized region, feel an impulse towards acquiring knowledge, he will not find the necessary teachers. For teaching is a craft and crafts do not exist in nomadic societies, as we said before. Hence he will have to migrate to a populous town, as he will for acquiring any other craft.

What we have said is well illustrated by Baghdad, Cordoba, Qairawan,² Basra, and Kufa. When the number of their in-

¹ But see Ibn Khaldun's statement, on page 52, to the effect that "every organized craft affects the soul in such a way as to give it a new mind which will dispose it to acquire another craft and makes the mind readier and more capable of acquiring new knowledge".

² Qairawan, a town in central Tunisia. Founded by the Arab conquerors of North Africa in 670, it became the capital of the province of Ifriqia and enjoyed great prosperity under the Aghlabide and Fatimite dynasties. Sacked by the Banu Hilal in 1057, it never regained its former prosperity.

habitants increased, in the first centuries of Islam, and civilization flourished, knowledge prospered in them and their people discovered many new arts, sciences, problems and scientific terms, surpassing in these things both their predecessors and their successors. When, however, their prosperity declined and their inhabitants dispersed, all this changed : knowledge and learning forsook them and moved on to other regions in Islam.

To-day we see learning flourishing mainly in Cairo in Egypt, which has had a large population and an advanced civilization for thousands of years, so that the crafts, and among them learning, are securely rooted and highly developed in that city. The effects of this have been reinforced by the events of the last two hundred years, in the Mameluke period since the time of Saladin. For the Turkish chieftains in Egypt fear that the Sultan will use his rights of ownership or overlordship to oppress their children and their successors. Hence those chieftains are wont to build Mosque schools, shrines and almshouses and to endow them with Waqf [Mortmain] lands, appointing their own children as supervisors of these endowments or as co-partners in them. (This habit has also been stimulated by the desire to gain merit by acts of piety and philanthropy.) The result of all this has been that endowments have multiplied, and with them revenues ; and the number of men of learning attracted by such stipends has increased—in fact men have travelled from Iraq or Morocco to Cairo in search of learning, which has greatly prospered in that city.

[Vol. II, p. 383]

... Know, too, that learning has almost disappeared in North Africa, owing to the weakness of the states existing there and to the disruption of society, with the ensuing decline or disappearance of the crafts. Thus Qairawan and Cordoba were

respectively the centres of North Africa and Spain, with large populations and highly developed crafts and sciences. In those cities learning struck roots, owing to their antiquity and high degree of civilization. When, however, ruin overtook them, learning disappeared from North Africa, except for a little that survived in Marrakesh under the Al Muwahhidun. But learning did not strike deep roots in Marrakesh, owing to the nomadic nature of the Al Muwahhidun dynasty and its short span of life, which meant that civilization hardly developed in Morocco. . . .

In the eastern part [of the Arab world],¹ however, learning did not disappear. On the contrary, it is flourishing, owing to the continued existence of prosperous societies. For although the great cities which had been centres of learning, such as Baghdad, Basra, or Kufa, have been ruined, God has replaced them by still greater cities ; hence learning has moved eastwards to Khorasan, in Persia, and to Transoxania,² and westwards to Cairo. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 377]

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY

. . . The development in man of writing, from potentiality to actuality, occurs only through teaching ; its excellence is conditioned by the degree of social life and civilization attained by the city, the amenities of life enjoyed in it, and its demand for a more perfect script. For writing is a craft, and like all other crafts is conditioned by society.

This is why we find most nomads illiterate, while those among them who can read or write do so only imperfectly and hesita-

¹ I.e. Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Arabia.

² Samarkand and Bokhara remained for long important centres of learning, under the Tatars.

tingly. This, too, is why we find the art of calligraphy more developed in the more opulent towns, owing to a longer tradition in the craft, as in Cairo to-day. . . .

The Arabic script (known as the Himyarite) reached a high degree of excellence under the Tubba' dynasty,¹ owing to the advanced state of civilization and opulence enjoyed by their country. It then moved on to Hira,² which was then ruled by the Mundhir dynasty, the kinsmen of the Tubba' and the renewers of Arab domination in Iraq. Writing, however, in Hira was not of the same high quality as in Yemen, owing to the less-advanced stage of civilization and crafts of the former. And it is from Hira that the inhabitants of Taif³ and Quraish⁴ are said to have learned to write. . . .

It is from Himyar that Mudar⁵ learned the Arabic script. They did not, however, perfect their calligraphy which, like any other craft, cannot attain a high level among nomads, owing to the incompatibility between a nomadic life and craftsmanship and the little need felt by nomads for most crafts. And the script of the Arabs was rude, as is the case to-day; in fact, their script to-day is somewhat better than it was then owing to their somewhat more civilized state and their greater contact with sedentary societies. . . .

As a result of this, notice what happened when the Companions of the Prophet began to write out the letters of the Koran. Their handwriting being somewhat shaky, many of their letters they drew differed from the shapes accepted by

¹ Pre-Islamic kings of Yemen.

² City near the Euphrates, in Iraq. In pre-Islamic times it was the centre of an Arab kingdom, vassal to the Sassanian kings.

³ Town in Hejaz, near Mecca.

⁴ The leading tribe in Mecca, in which the Prophet Mohammad was born.

⁵ North Arabian tribes.

calligraphists. Their successors then copied their script, in the hope of gaining blessings by imitating the Companions . . . just as we see to-day many copying the script of a sage or saint, sometimes wrongly, in the hope of gaining merit. . . . And do not heed those fools who say that these Companions were expert calligraphists and that their errors are only apparent, having a symbolical hidden meaning. . . .

For writing is one of the crafts which help society to live, as we have shown ; now perfection in the crafts is relative, there being no absolute perfection, hence imperfection in writing is due not to a lack of religion or morals but to economic and social causes. . . .

When the Arabs conquered many lands, founded their empire, and established themselves in Basra and Kufa, the state found itself in need of clerks. Hence there was a demand for calligraphists and teachers of calligraphy ; the quality of writing improved greatly in Basra and Kufa (though remaining far from perfect) ; and the Kufi script is still known unto this day.

Then the Arabs spread still further and conquered fresh kingdoms, among them North Africa and Spain. The Abbasides built Baghdad, in which writing reached its zenith, owing to the high degree of civilization of that city and its position as the capital of the Arab Empire and the centre of Islam. . . . The Baghddi script was invented, and was followed by the African, which is still in use. But the Omayyad kings of Spain cut themselves off [from the rest of the Arab Empire] and had their own type of civilization and craftsmanship ; hence they worked out their own peculiar script, the Spanish, which is still known. . . . But when the Muslim state began to weaken and decay all this, [i.e. the writing of books and collecting of libraries] began to decline. The schools and libraries of Baghdad were wiped out with the extinction of the Caliphate ; calligraphy and writing,

nay learning itself, moved on to Cairo, where it is prosperous, being carried on by a school of experts. . . .

As for the Arabs from Spain, when the Arab and succeeding Berber kingdoms were overthrown by the Christians, they were dispersed to Morocco and North Africa . . . imparting their crafts to the inhabitants of the towns and clinging on to the ruling dynasties. As a result their script conquered and effaced the African script ; the scripts of Qairawan and Mahdia¹ were forgotten, together with their customs and crafts, and all the inhabitants of North Africa, as far as Tunis, adopted the Spanish script, owing to the prevalence of refugees from eastern Spain, and became as proficient in it as the best Spaniards. The only exception was that of the inhabitants of the Jarid,² who were not in contact with the writers of Spain but merely visited the court at Tunis from time to time. Thus the script of the Africans became one of the finest scripts of the Spaniards. When, later, the power of the Al Muwahhidun state began to weaken and the level of civilization and opulence began to sink, writing began to deteriorate. Forms were corrupted and the teaching of calligraphy was gradually forgotten with the falling off in civilization. The Spanish script remained, however, a witness to the former prosperity and an illustration of our contention that once crafts have struck a deep root in a civilization it is difficult to wipe them out entirely. . . .

Later on fine calligraphy was forgotten except in the immediate proximity of the royal courts as though it had never existed ; and writing in North Africa and Morocco deteriorated greatly

¹ Mahdia, a town on the east coast of Tunisia, built in 916 by the founder of the Fatimite dynasty, 'Ubaid Allah. One of the main centres of the Barbary corsairs, it was captured by the Normans in 1087 and by Andrea Doria in 1550.

² Shatt el Jarid, a district of lakes and marshes in south Tunisia.

and reached a very low level ; so that newly copied books became very difficult to read with profit, owing to the numerous errors in their script. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 338]

LANGUAGE IS A SKILL

KNOW then that all languages are skills, similar to crafts. For they are skills of the tongue used to express meaning, the meaning being more or less successfully expressed according as to whether the skill is more or less perfect. And the skill applies not to individual words but to syntax and the construction of sentences. If, therefore, a perfect skill is acquired in the combining of individual words, in the order demanded by the situation, to express the required meaning, the speaker will have attained his object of conveying his intention to the hearer ; this skill is known as Rhetoric.

Now skills are acquired only through repetition of acts, for the act comes first and imprints a quality on the mind. Further repetition leads to a disposition of the soul, a disposition being a quality which is not deeply rooted. Still further repetition creates a skill, that is, a firmly fixed quality.

Thus an Arabic speaking person, whose skill (i.e. the Arabic language) is spread throughout his community, hears the speech, style, and modes of expression of his contemporaries (just as a boy hears the different words and learns their meanings and then hears and grasps the different constructions), refreshing his memory at every instant from every speaker until he has finally acquired a skill, or deeply rooted habit, and has become like others. In this way languages and dialects are transmitted from generations to generations and learned by foreigners and by children.

And this is the meaning of the popular saying that language is natural to the Arabs. By this they mean that the Arabs acquired their language through a primary skill, which they transmitted to others but which they did not learn from anyone. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 297]

THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

. . . Later on the language of Mudar was corrupted, owing to intercourse with foreigners. This came about when the younger generations grew up in close contact with foreigners from whom they heard, and adopted, modes of expression different from those used by the Arabs. At the same time they would hear the Arabic modes of expression, hence they tended to be confused, taking a little from here and a little from there, and thus developed a new skill in expression, inferior to that of their forefathers. This is what is meant by corruption.

And this is why the dialect of Quraish is the purest and most classical of the Arabic dialects, because of their remoteness from all foreign lands. . . . Those tribes, however, who lived at the periphery of Arabia, such as Rabi'a, Lakhm, Judham, Ghassan, Iyad, Quda'a and the Yemenites, and were consequently in touch with the Persians, Byzantines, and Ethiopians, did not have such a pure language, owing to their intercourse with foreigners. And that is why philologists use the proximity or remoteness of a tribe to Quraish as a criterion for determining whether or not its dialect shall be used as a standard of purity.

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. . . The interest in the dialect of Mudar developed when it began to be corrupted, owing to the intermixture of Arabs with foreigners after the conquest of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and

North Africa. Common use soon changed that dialect until it was transformed into another language.¹ Now as the Koran had been revealed in the dialect of Mudar, and the Sayings of the Prophet transmitted in it, it was feared that, with the forgetting of that dialect, access to those two pillars of the faith would be barred and that they would soon cease to be understood and pass into oblivion.

It therefore became necessary to write down the laws of that dialect, fix its standards, and discover its rules. A new science grew up, that of Arabic grammar, with its chapters and sections, its premises and problems . . . serving as a ladder leading up to the Book of God and the laws of His Prophet. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 301]

LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

A skill in that [i.e. the Arabic] language is not the same thing as a knowledge of Arabic grammar, and can dispense with the latter. This is because Arabic grammar consists of the knowledge of the laws and patterns underlying that skill. It is therefore knowledge *about* the skill, but not *of* the skill ; in other words, it is not the mastery of the skill itself. It is as though a man knew the theory but not the practice of a craft ; thus, for instance, someone who knew much about sewing, without actually being able to sew, would describe its processes as follows : “ It is the putting of a thread into the eye of the needle followed by the sticking of the needle into the two edges of the cloth . . . ” with a full description of the different operations involved. Such a person however, if asked to do some actual sewing would be incapable of doing anything. . . .

¹ The heading of the chapter from which this excerpt is taken runs as follows : “ *The present day Arabic language is distinct and different from that of Mudar and Himyar.* ”

The same is true of the relation between the laws of grammatical analysis and parsing and the mastery of the actual skill in the language. For the knowledge of grammar is the knowledge of the mode of procedure. Hence we often find eminent grammarians, who know all the rules, yet when asked to write two lines to a brother or friend, or a letter making a request or complaint, commit many errors and are unable to find the right words to express their meaning or to put these words into the proper forms of construction. Conversely we find many who have mastered the art of writing Arabic verse and prose and who yet are incapable of distinguishing between subject and predicate or nominative and dative, knowing nothing at all about the rules of grammar.

We do indeed find some grammarians who are good writers, but that is rare and accidental, and is specially noticeable among those who have studied the books of Sibawayhi. For Sibawayhi did not content himself with expounding rules of analysis and parsing, but filled his book with examples of Arabic proverbs, verses, and expressions. Hence his book helps considerably in acquiring the skill of writing, so that those who study it learn much of the speech of the Arabs, which sticks in their memory—emerging when required—and gives them the necessary skill and eloquence.

There are some students of Sibawayhi, however, who do not pay much attention to the examples given, hence they acquire a mastery of grammar but not of a skill in the language. As for the students of later grammar books—which contain nothing but bare rules of grammar without examples of prose or verse—they are rarely aware of the existence or importance of that skill. Hence they think that they have mastered the art of writing when in fact they are as far removed from it as can be. . . .

The grammarians of North Africa, however, approach the

study of Arabic in the same way as any science. . . . So that grammar has almost become part of Logic or Dialectics . . . losing its connection with idiom and living speech, because of the neglect of examples taken from actual speech and the lack of practice. For practice is of all things the most conducive to the acquisition of a skill in language. Rules of grammar are merely means to be used in learning, but they [i.e. grammarians] have diverted grammar from its proper use, changing it into a pure science and neglecting its fruits.

You will therefore see, from what we have established in this section, that the acquisition of a skill in the Arabic language can come only through the learning by heart of many sayings of the Arabs, until the imagination of the student has a vivid picture of the loom upon which the Arabs wove their constructions. When this has occurred, the student will weave upon that same loom, thus becoming like one who has grown up with them [i.e. the early Arabs] and talked to them in their own language and thus acquired a skill in expressing his own thoughts in their tongue.

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. . . The proper way for him who wishes to acquire that skill is to learn by heart examples of their [i.e. early Arabic] speech, taken from the Koran, Hadith,¹ verses and rhymed prose of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic writers, until, having learned much of their prose and verse, he will become like one who has grown up among them and learned directly from them to express himself. After that he must try to express his thoughts according to their style and constructions. This learning by heart and self expression will give him a skill which will improve with use and repetition. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 307]

¹ Sayings of the Prophet.

... For a writer is like a mason or a weaver, the appropriate mental forms of verbal construction being like the model followed¹ by the builder, or the loom used by the weaver ; hence any deviation from the model¹ in building, or from the loom in weaving, will lead to error.

Do not maintain, however, that a knowledge of the rules of rhetoric is sufficient. For these rules are scientific, normative laws, whose function is to establish the possibility of constructing a sentence on their particular model ; they are scientific and continuous standards, similar to the laws of grammar.

The constructions to which we refer, however, have nothing to do with such rules. They are a sort of form that leaves its imprint on the mind of those who have grasped the constructions of Arabic poetry, by often repeating them with their tongues. It then becomes possible for such persons to use these constructions as models in their verse, as we have said before, when discussing speech in general.

The scientific laws of grammar and rhetoric, on the other hand, are of no use for this purpose. For not all [the forms and constructions] that are allowed by the rules of grammar have been actually used by the Arabs in their speech or writing ; the forms that were actually used can only be discovered by those who memorize their writings. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 332]

LITERARY TASTE

On the meaning of the word "taste", as used by rhetoricians, and the proof that it cannot, generally, be acquired by foreigners who learn Arabic. . . . For acquired skills which strike deep roots and establish themselves in a place soon seem natural and instinctive

¹ Or "mould used".

to its inhabitants. Hence, many fools, who do not understand the nature of these skills, believe that the correct speech of the Arabs, from the point of view of syntax and style, is a natural matter, saying that speech is natural to the Arabs. This is not so ; for their eloquence is a verbal skill in the construction of words, which skill has struck root and gone deep until it has seemed to be an instinct or nature. And this skill, as was pointed out before, has been acquired by constant hearing of, and practice in, the Arab tongue, with a resulting consciousness of its peculiarities of syntax and style—and not by a knowledge of the rules of grammar, which have been discovered by grammarians. . . .

This having been established, we may go on to say that the skill of verbal eloquence will guide its owner in composing verse and in finding the constructions conforming most closely to those used by Arab writers of prose and verse. And should such a person wish to deviate from the path traced by these right constructions he will not be able to do so ; his tongue will not approve of these deviations, because it has not been accustomed to them, nor will his deep-sunk skill guide him to them. And if he come across some writings which do not conform to the standards of good Arabic prose, he will be repelled by them and dislike them and recognize them as not being of the kind of Arabic to which he has been accustomed. Yet he may well be unable to give reasons for his repulsions, like those given by grammarians or rhetoricians. For grammarians and rhetoricians apply the rules which they have deduced [from a study of syntax and style], while he is guided by an intuition springing from a prolonged practice of Arabic which has made him become like an Arab [i.e. an Arab of the pre-Islamic or early Islamic era]. . . .

TRANSLITERATION OF FOREIGN WORDS

... Not all peoples pronounce the sounds [of the letters of the alphabet] in the same way; and it often happens that a people uses certain letters which are unknown to another people.

Thus the Arabs have twenty-eight letters, some of which are absent in the Hebrew language, just as some of the Hebrew letters are unknown to us, and the same may be said of the Frankish, Turkish, Berber, and other foreign languages.

Now Arabic writers have agreed to represent the different sounds by letters of specified shapes, such as "a", "b", "c", and so on. Should they therefore come across a sound which has no equivalent in the Arabic alphabet, they will not represent it in any distinctive way. At most certain authors will represent it by the letter indicating the sound which is closest to it (immediately preceding or immediately following it) in our language. This, however, is not satisfactory, involving as it does a distortion of the original sound.

And inasmuch as our book covers the history of the Berbers, and of certain other foreign peoples, and therefore includes certain names and words containing letters which have no generally accepted equivalent among the Arabic letters, we have had to devise a method for representing those letters. We have therefore not contented ourselves with representing them by the letters showing the sound immediately succeeding that sound in our language, but rather by the two nearest letters in Arabic, so that the reader may be able to attain the appropriate sound by keeping between the two nearest Arabic sounds. . . . Thus we have represented the hard "g"¹ of the Berbers, which lies between our "kaf"² and "geem"³ by drawing a "kaf"

¹ As in "God", "agree" etc.

² The "k" sound, as in "king", etc.

³ The soft "g" or "j" as in "jay", "gem", etc.

and putting a dot beneath it to represent the “geem”¹ to show that it is intermediate between the “kaf” and the “geem” sounds. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 53]

METHOD OF TEACHING

THE imparting of knowledge to students can only be profitable if it be pursued gradually, bit by bit and little by little. First he must be taught the fundamental problems of every branch of the subject that he is studying. The explanations given must be general, due regard being paid to the power of the student's mind and to his readiness to absorb what is given him. When by that means the whole of the subject has been covered, he will have acquired a skill in that science, but it will be only a partial, inadequate skill, whose sole result will be that it has prepared him to understand the subject and to grapple with its problems.

It is then necessary to return to that subject a second time, lifting the teaching to a higher plane. This time the teacher must not content himself with generalities, but must dwell on all points of dispute, and the different views held thereon, until the field is once more covered and the student's skill is improved.

Then, once more, the now trained student must be brought back to the field ; no major point, however obscure or controversial, must be left in suspense ; everything must be explained to the student, thus enabling him to acquire a thorough skill in the subject.

It will be seen, then, that the best method involves three repetitions ; in some cases not so many repetitions are necessary, depending on the student's natural gifts and aptitudes.

¹ The “geem” sign contains a dot underneath the letter.

We have seen many teachers of our generation who are ignorant of the methods of teaching and who consequently present the student from the start with the most obscure problems of the subject, asking him to squeeze his brain and solve them. They deem such exercises a training in the science, and therefore insist that the students shall master these problems ; they confuse their students by teaching them the most advanced parts of their subject at the very beginning of their course, before the student is ready to understand these parts. For the readiness and ability to understand a subject develops only gradually. At the beginning the student is incapable of a real understanding except rarely and in an approximate and general way, with plenty of sensible, concrete, examples to help him. Later on his ability grows little by little, through increased familiarity with and repetitions of his subject, until he himself becomes ready and able to grasp the fundamentals of the subject. Whereas if he be plunged straight into abstruse and advanced questions, when he is still untrained and incapable of understanding, his mind will weary of them ; and he will deem the subject difficult in itself and will therefore slacken in his efforts and shy away from it, although the trouble arises in fact from defective teaching. . . .

It is also necessary not to confuse the subject matter given in the [text] book with other subjects, until the student has thoroughly mastered the [text] book and acquired therefrom a skill which he can apply to other subjects. For a student who has acquired a skill in one of the sciences is ready to apply it to other sciences ; moreover, he will have developed an eagerness to learn more and to climb ever higher until he has mastered the whole of the science. If, however, many subjects be presented to him at once he will be unable to understand them, his mind will weary and fail in its work, he will despair of ever

mastering the subject, and he will finally forsake learning and "God guides whomsoever He wills".

It is also necessary not to drag on too long in one subject and one book, by interrupting the hours of study unduly, for this will lead to forgetfulness on the part of the student, as also to the dispersion and disconnection of the different parts of the subject, making it more difficult to acquire a skill in that subject. For if the whole of the subject matter, from beginning to end, be present before the mind and unforgotten, the skill is easier to acquire and more secure ; for skills are acquired by repeating the act and by following it up ; if therefore the act be forgotten, the resulting skill will also be forgotten, and "God has taught you that which you did not know".

And among the methods which it is necessary to follow is that of not confusing the student by presenting him with two sciences¹ simultaneously, for then he will rarely master either of them, owing to his attention being divided and distracted by each away from the other. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 251]

TEXT BOOKS

An excess of books written on a subject is an obstacle in the way of mastering that subject. One of the impediments which have prevented men from mastering knowledge is the large number of books written, the difference between the terms used, and the divergences in the methods followed. The student who is expected to study all this, and hence to learn all the terms, or

¹ It should not be forgotten that in medieval times the subdivision of the sciences was much less advanced than it is to-day. Hence each science covered a very large field and two sciences would be very far removed from each other.

most of them, by heart and to observe the different methods will have to spend a whole lifetime on a science, and yet not succeed in mastering it. . . .

An illustration is provided by the study of Arabic grammar where the student is expected to read the works of Sibawayhi and the commentaries written upon it and to know the systems of the schools of Basra, Kufa, Baghdad, and Spain, and of the Ancients and the Moderns. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 248]

An excess of Digests on the different subjects is harmful to learning. Many of our contemporaries are fond of compiling digests of the different sciences, which they use as a summary of the whole subject. These digests consist of the enumeration of the problems of the subject, and of the proofs thereof, in a very concise form, packing each sentence with many terms taken from the science. And, very often, their digests consist of summaries of some classic work. . . .

This method has been harmful, not only to style but also to understanding. For the beginner suddenly finds himself confronted with the most advanced parts of the subject, for which he is unprepared ; this is a grave pedagogical error, as will be shown.

Moreover this method (which is intended to save labour) entails much work on the part of students, who have to grasp the sense of the concise, obscure, terms, charged with meaning, which are used in the summaries and to extricate the problems from those words . . . thus wasting much time.

Lastly, even if knowledge be acquired from such digests, without any mishap, the skill resulting therefrom will be much less perfect than that resulting from the study of simple, lengthily expounded subjects. For the latter involves much repetition

and many allusions to references, which aid in the acquisition of a perfect skill. . . .

Thus the authors of these digests, meaning to facilitate the students' task of memorization, actually burden them with work, by making them less capable of acquiring the necessary skills.

[Vol. III, p. 250]

HARSHNESS TO PUPILS

. . . For a harsh and violent upbringing, whether of pupils, slaves or servants, has as its consequence that violence dominates the soul and prevents the development of the personality. Energy gives way to indolence, and wickedness, deceit, cunning, and trickery are developed by fear of physical violence. These tendencies soon become ingrained habits, corrupting the human quality which men acquire through social intercourse and which consists of manliness and the ability to defend oneself and one's household. Such men become dependent on others for protection; their souls even become too lazy to acquire virtue or moral beauty. They become ingrown, cease striving towards the goal of perfect humanity, and drop into the ranks of the very meanest.

This is what has happened to every nation which has been dominated by others and treated harshly. It can be seen clearly in all those persons who are subjected to the will of others and do not enjoy full control of their lives. Consider, for instance, the Jews, whose characters have degenerated owing to such treatment so that they are renowned, in every age and climate, for their wickedness and slyness. The reason for this is to be found in the causes mentioned above.

It is therefore necessary that masters should not treat their pupils harshly or arbitrarily, nor fathers, their children. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 264]

TRAVEL AND STUDY

Travelling in pursuit of knowledge and for the purpose of meeting new teachers makes learning more perfect. This is because men acquire their knowledge, characteristics, virtues, and opinions either through book learning or through direct contact and precept. Habits and skills acquired through contact and precept are, however, stronger and more deeply rooted ; hence the more numerous the teachers with whom the student has been in direct touch, the more deeply rooted is his skill.

Moreover technical terms and methods are confusing to students, who are often inclined to think that these terms or methods form an integral part of the science. The only way to remove this confusion is for the student to have direct experience of different methods, under different teachers. Such contact with learned men and teachers will give him more discrimination, owing to the diversity of terms and methods which he will come across. He will then be in a position to abstract the science from any particular set of terms and to understand that terminologies and methods of study are merely means to be used in the acquisition of science. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 266].

INSTRUMENTAL SCIENCES

No great time should be spent on the instrumental sciences. Know then that the sciences known to human society are of two kinds : sciences studied for their own intrinsic merit, such as the Religious Sciences (i.e. Exegesis, the Sayings of the Prophet, Jurisprudence, and Theology), the Natural Sciences, and that part of Philosophy dealing with the nature of God ; and sciences which are a mechanical instrument used in the study of the

former group, such as Arabic Grammar, Arithmetic and other sciences in the study of Religion, and Logic in the study of Philosophy. Logic is also sometimes used by latter-day writers in the study of Theology and Jurisprudence.

Now there is no objection to the student's pursuing at great length the study of the former group, following up their ramifications and discovering new theories and proofs, for this will improve his skill and give him a clearer understanding of the meaning of the terms used and the objects sought.

The instrumental sciences, however, such as Grammar, Logic and the like, should be studied only in so far as they are means towards the study of another science. No great discussion or analysis should be indulged in for this takes the student away from the object of these sciences which are instruments and nothing else. Any further attention paid to them, then, degenerates into logomachy and involves great difficulty in acquiring the necessary skills owing to the length and complexity of these subjects.

And the effort spent on these instrumental sciences may often prevent the mastery of those other sciences which are studied for their intrinsic value and which are the more important group. For life is short and it is impossible to master all branches of knowledge perfectly. Hence the effort spent on the instrumental sciences may be a fruitless waste of time ; and this is what many latter-day thinkers have done in their study of Grammar, Logic, and even Principles of Jurisprudence. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 258]

CHAPTER NINE. THEORY OF BEING AND THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

THE SCALE OF BEINGS

KNOW then—may God guide us and you—that there is no end to the wonders of the world. All creatures are subjected to a regular and orderly system ; causes are linked to effects ; and beings to beings ; while certain objects are transformed into other objects.

Beginning with the corporeal sensible world, notice first how the visible elements are ranged in an ascending order from earth, through water and air, to fire. Each is connected with the other and each is ready to transform itself into the one immediately above or below it, and sometimes does in fact so transform itself. Each is more delicate than the one below it, until we reach the world of the spheres. . . .

Turn then to the world of creation, beginning with minerals, then plants, then animals, ranged in a beautiful order. The highest stage of the minerals is connected with the lowest stage of the plants, for example grasses and seedless plants ; the last stage of the plants, for instance palm trees and vines, is connected with the first stage of the animals, such as snails and shell-fish which enjoy only the sense of touch.

(By “connection” between these creatures we mean that the highest stage of each order has the strange power of transforming itself into the lowest stage of the following order.)

The animal world is wide and varied and culminates, through the apes (who have the powers of sense and apprehension but not of foresight or contemplation or actual thought), in man who

can foresee, consider, and think, and who forms the limit of visible creation. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 173]

GOD'S EXISTENCE

. . . All objects in the created world, whether they are things or acts (human or animal) presuppose prior causes which bring them into being.

And each of these causes is in its turn an event which presupposes prior causes. Hence the series of causes ascends until it culminates in the Cause of causes, their Maker and Creator—praised be His name, than whom there is no other God. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 27]

THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

. . . Do not trust the claims of thought to be able to comprehend beings and their causes and to follow out the ramifications of existence—this is sheer nonsense.

For every percipient imagines the world to be restricted to his range of perceptions, which is far from being true. Notice the deaf, for whom the world is confined to the four senses and reflection and for whom no sounds exist. In the same way the blind lack knowledge of visible things. It is only the traditions they take over from their parents, teachers, and acquaintances that make them admit the existence of what they do not perceive. In other words their belief is founded on the general opinion around them, not on their instinct or sense perceptions. Similarly animals, if they could answer our questions, would be found to deny the possibility of intellectual, reflective acts of the mind.

This point being established, it is probable that there is a kind

of perception superior to our own ; for our perceptions are created and cannot comprehend the vast range of beings. God's creation, being vaster than man's, is outside man's range of comprehension ; He alone comprehends all. . . .

This does not impugn the validity of the mind or its apprehensions. The mind is an accurate scale, whose recordings are certain and reliable ; but to use it to weigh questions relating to the Unity of God, or the after life, or the nature of prophecy or of the divine qualities, or other such subjects falling outside its range, is like trying to use a goldsmith's scale to weigh mountains. This does not mean that the scale is in itself inaccurate.

The truth of the matter is that the mind has limits within which it is rigidly confined ; it cannot therefore hope to comprehend God and His qualities, itself being only one of the many atoms created by God. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 29]

PERCEPTION AND REFLECTION

. . . Animals apprehend by sensations ; their apprehensions, however, are not connected, for connection takes place through thought. . . .

The more a man's reflective power is capable of comprehending a regular chain of causes and effects the more fully is the human quality developed in him. Some men are capable of following up two or three links in a chain of causes and effects but no more ; yet others can push on to the fifth or sixth, and in these last the distinctive human quality is more developed than in others.

An illustration is provided by chess. One of the two players in that game may be capable of foreseeing the third, or even the

fifth, move arising from his present move, and that because each will follow in a given order. His opponent, on the other hand, whose mind is more limited in its scope, cannot see so far ahead. I admit that this example is not quite adequate, for chess is an acquired skill, while a grasp of the relations of cause and effect arises from a natural disposition. Nevertheless, it does help in understanding the principles which we have just expounded. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 367]

Know, then, that God distinguished man from other animals by reflection, the source of his perfection and the end of his honour and pre-eminence over other beings. This is because apprehension, that is the awareness by the percipient in himself of that which is outside him, is peculiar to animals, alone of all [created] beings. For animals are aware of what goes on outside themselves through the external senses (viz. hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch) which God gave them. Now man adds to this the power of apprehending that which is outside himself by means of his thought, which is behind sensation. Thought takes place by means of a power residing in the middle of his brain which allows him to grasp the images of sensible objects and to turn them over in his mind, abstracting further images from them. Reflection consists of the manipulation of these images (behind sensation) by the mind, which breaks them up or recomposes them [to form other images]. . . .

[Vol. II, p. 364]

MENTAL OPERATIONS

. . . The basis of knowledge is sensation through the five senses. Now all animals, whether rational or not, share

equally in this form of apprehension, but man is distinguished from the other animals by his grasp of general concepts, which are abstracted from percepts. The process is as follows : an image of all similar objects is formed in the imagination which is then applied to all such objects ; and this image is the concept. The mind then groups together these similar objects and other objects which resemble them in certain respects, thus forming a new image, applicable to all of them in so far as they are alike. And this ascending abstraction continues until there is no other resembling concept so that it [i.e. the concept which is being evolved] must necessarily be simple.

Thus by abstraction from several individual men is obtained the concept of the species, which covers them all ; a comparison between man and the animals then gives, by further abstraction, a concept of the genus, covering them all ; then comes a further comparison of this genus with plants,¹ and so on until the highest genus is reached, viz. the essence, to which no resembling concept can be found so that at that point the mind stops short. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 108]

LOGIC AND INTUITION

LOGIC, then, is an artificial thing, adapted to the nature of the process of thought and conforming to the form of its action. And being artificial, it is generally dispensed with. That is why we see many of the great investigators of Nature attaining without the help of logic the objects they set out to discover in the different sciences. This is especially true when their sole object is the discovery of truth and when they rely on the mercy of God, which is the greatest possible help. They let

¹ Reading "nabat", as in the Beirut-Cairo edition.

their thought follow the path set before it by its own nature, and this leads naturally to the discovery of the sought-for truth, owing to the instincts planted in the mind by God. . . .

Not everyone can ascend these gradations rapidly, or easily break through the veils that screen knowledge. For the mind often stops before the veil of words used in discussions, or stumbles over the connection of arguments adduced in the heat of controversies and confusions, and is thus diverted from the attainment of the desired knowledge, only a few, guided by God, overcoming such obstacles.

If, then, you should find your mind beset by difficulties and confusion, so that you begin to doubt of ever reaching the truth, throw such artificial matters aside, cast away the veil of words and doubts, let your mind turn to the empty spaces of natural thought, for which it was created, allowing your mind to roam in it, seeking its object, and following in the footsteps of your great predecessors. When you have done all this, the light of knowledge will shine upon you. You may then return to the forms of evidence and pour into them what you have just acquired, following carefully the artificial canons [of logic]. Then clothe it [the truth you have discovered] in words and present it to the world of speech and imagery, well knit and firmly constructed.

Should you, however, stop at the stage of discussion and doubts, seeking to distinguish between what is true and false in them, you will never advance towards your desired object, as is the case with most present-day thinkers. For such matters are artificial and positive, whose different aspects resemble each other and seem equally plausible so that truth cannot emerge clearly; . . . for truth can only emerge clearly when it comes to the mind naturally. . . .

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

... Moreover we observe in all the orders of created things different effects. Thus in the order of inanimate, perceptible things we see the effects of the movements of the heavenly bodies and of the elements, while in animate beings we see growth and apprehension. These effects testify to the presence of an agent distinct from these bodies, and consequently spiritual, which is yet connected with the world of animate beings, whose essence implies such a connexion—in other words the understanding and moving soul.

And there must necessarily be above the soul another being, which is connected with it and which gives to it the powers of understanding and of movement. This being must be in essence pure understanding and intelligence—in other words the world of angels.

It follows from this that the soul must be potentially capable of casting off its humanity in favour of angelicity, in order that at some moment or other, it may actually be transformed into an angel. This can take place only after it has actually achieved its full spiritual self, as we shall explain later, and touched the order of creation lying above it, as is the case with all created beings ranged in the order we have described above.

The soul therefore touches two orders of being, one below it and one above. From below it is connected with the body, from which it derives its powers of sense perception, which make it capable of attaining intellection; from above it is connected with the world of angels, from which it derives its powers of gnosis and scientific knowledge; for the world of becoming is to be found in the being of angels, divorced from time (and this is because of the order and gradation in the world of creation and the consequent interconnection of the different powers and beings, as shown above).

Now the human soul is invisible, yet its effects can be seen in the body ; the body, and its different parts, whether singly or as a whole, is thus like a machine moved by the soul and its powers.

Of these powers is that of Activity, such as striking with the hand, walking with the leg, and talking with the tongue, or a general movement of the body. Another power is that of Understanding, which includes several faculties rising in order up to the highest one, that of Reflection, which is denoted by the term Rational.

There are also the powers of External Sensation, with their instruments of sight and hearing, and so on, which ascend to the internal senses :

The first of these is Common Sense, which apprehends sense data, whether visible, audible, tangible or other, in a synthetic whole. This differentiates it from the external senses, for sense data do not crowd in upon it at the same time¹.

The Common Sense carries sense data to the Imagination, a faculty which represents to the soul sensible things as they are but abstracted from external elements. And both these faculties [i.e. Common Sense and Imagination] use as the instruments of their functioning the first cavity of the brain (the front part thereof for the Common Sense and the back part for the Imagination).

Imagination leads up to the Estimative Faculty² and Memory.

¹ Ibn Khaldun means to stress the fact that sense data are co-ordinated, by some faculty other than the senses, into what one might call a "synthetic unity of perception". The notion seems to have been taken over by the Arabs from Aristotle's *Sensus Communis*.

² It is very difficult to translate "al wahima" (reading as in the Beirut-Cairo edition). To the best of my knowledge, the concept is not to be found in Aristotle, but it occurs frequently in the writings of the Muslim philosophers, as well as in those of the Christian Scholastics, such as

The Estimative Faculty apprehends concepts dealing with persons, such as the enmity of Peter and the friendship of Paul, the kindness of the father and the cruelty of the wolf. Memory is like a chest storing up all the concepts, whether imagined or not, to be used when needed. And the bodily instrument of those two faculties is the back cavity of the brain (the front part thereof for the Estimative Faculty and the back part for Memory).

All these faculties lead up to that of Thought, whose bodily instrument is the middle cavity of the brain. It is through this faculty that the process of contemplation and intellection takes place. And the soul is always moved by this faculty because it always strives to liberate itself from the state of potentiality characteristic of mankind and to enter on the state of actuality, which is that of intellection, in which it emulates the superior spiritual beings [i.e angels]. At this stage the soul enters on the first rung of spiritual beings, in that it apprehends without bodily instruments, a state towards which it is always moving and striving. And the soul may be divested totally from the state of humanity and its spirituality and enter the superior one of angelicity without any acquisition, merely in virtue of the original nature and instincts planted in it by God.

Human souls fall into three categories. The first of these is incapable by its very nature of attaining spiritual apprehension. Hence it is content to move downwards, towards sensible and imaginative apprehension and the combination of concepts, taken from the Estimative Faculty and Memory, according to fixed laws and a given order. Through this process persons

Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. The term used by the latter, *Virtus Aestimativa*, or *Vis Aestimativa*, is usually rendered into English as the Estimative Faculty. I am indebted for this information to Mr. Majid Fakhry, who helped me in translating this passage.

falling in this category attain a knowledge of inductive and deductive sciences, which although mental have their seat in the body. And these sciences make use of the Imagination, but their scope is limited to the original primary truths which they cannot transcend, and on whose validity the whole chain of reasoning depends. This is, in the majority of cases, the scope of human sensuous understanding ; it is in this field that scientists properly operate and in which their knowledge is limited.

The second category consists of those whose thought moves towards pure reason and that understanding which because of its essential constitution does not require bodily instruments. Consequently such persons can transcend those first principles which mark the scope of the first kind of human understanding and can move freely in the space¹ of the objects of inner perception, which is pure, unbounded consciousness. And this is the understanding characteristic of saints and learned theologians, as also the understanding given, after their death, to the Blessed in Heaven.

The third category consists of those whose nature is such that they have shed off all their humanity, in its bodily and spiritual aspects alike, and are proceeding towards the higher order of angels, in order to become, at certain moments, actually angels themselves, to whom it is granted to see the heavenly beings in their habitation and hear the speech of the soul and the divine word : and those are the Prophets—peace be upon them ! For God caused them to shed their humanity at that moment, the moment of Revelation, in virtue of a nature peculiar to them, which allows them to overcome the obstacles of the body as long as they remain tied down to that body. For God implanted in their nature instincts of rectitude which make them pursue the

¹ Literally “ void ”.

right direction, and He endued them with a desire to worship. Thus, in virtue of their very nature, they can orient themselves towards the higher spheres, shedding their humanity, whenever they so desire, and doing so instinctively, not by any acquired techniques.

And thus they shed off their humanity and receive the contents of Revelation from the heavenly beings, later translating it into human terms in order to make it intelligible to the common run of men.

Thus, occasionally, one of these Prophets will hear a murmur which seems a symbol of words, from which he will gather the meaning which it was meant to convey to him ; and no sooner is the murmuring over than he has become conscious of it and grasped its meaning. Or else the angel who is delivering the message will come before him in the shape of a man and address him, so that he will understand him. And the receiving of what the angel says, together with the returning to the state of human apprehension and the understanding of the meaning of the message, seems to take place in an instant, nay in less than the twinkling of an eye ; for all this is timeless and takes place simultaneously, so that it seems very rapid. . . .

[Vol. I, p. 174]

FAITH

. . . The object of all these religious observances is to produce in the soul a deep-rooted discipline which will lead to a necessary knowledge of the Unity of God. And this is what is meant by the certitude of faith, and this is what leads to beatitude.

Both bodily and spiritual observances have the same object. By this is meant that faith, which is the ground and source of these observances, falls, in this respect, into many gradations.

The lowest is the belief of the heart, concurring with the profession of the lips, while the highest is the attitude resulting from that conviction of the heart, and the ensuing works, which seizes upon the heart and all the senses and rules them so that every single act is animated by and subjected to that overriding conviction of faith. And this last is the highest category of faith, the perfect faith, which guards its possessor against the commission of any sin, whether great or small, since the depth and strength of the discipline produced by faith prevents any deviation from the path traced by it. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 33]

MYSTICISM

. . . And these spiritual exercises, solitude and prayers, are usually followed by the withdrawal of the veil of sensation and the vision of divine worlds of which those who rely on sensation know nothing ; and the soul is one of these worlds.

And the cause of this unveiling is that when the soul turns away from external sensation and withdraws into itself, the power wielded by sensation weakens, while the soul is strengthened and renews its growth ; and prayer helps the soul, being as food which makes it grow. This growth and increase continue until knowledge gives way to contemplation, the veil of sensation falls off and the soul fully actualizes its essence by achieving understanding. Then the mystic begins to understand the divine qualities, share in the divine knowledge, and receive God's special favour ; and his soul comes nearer to achieving its potentialities in the higher order of angels.

This contemplation frequently occurs in those who practise spiritual exercises. Such persons understand secrets of creation not grasped by others ; similarly they apprehend many events

before they actually take place ; and they have power over things, which they subject to their wills. But the great mystics do not highly esteem this contemplation, nor their power over objects, nor do they talk about the reality of anything unless they have been ordered to do so ; nay they regard all such experiences as temptations and appeal to God to deliver them from them. . . .

Moreover such contemplation is not regarded by them as true and perfect unless it spring from moral rectitude. For contemplation may come to one who is hungry and solitary, even though he be morally corrupt ; to such men as sorcerers, Christians and to other practitioners of spiritual exercises. We, however, are talking only of contemplation springing from rectitude. For just as a metallic mirror, if it be convex or concave, will give a distorted, false, image of the beholder, while if it be flat will give a true image, so rectitude in the soul is as flatness in the mirror in respect to the states of the soul which it evokes. . . .

. . . The powers of understanding of those who have not participated in the methods of the mystics are unable to grasp the ecstasies of those mystics and their experiences in these matters. Some theologians admit their validity [i.e. of the experiences] while others deny them ; nor are proofs and evidences of any use, one way or the other, in such matters for they belong to the realm of internal experience. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 63]

. . . Man is made up of two parts ; one of them corporeal, and the other spiritual, fused with it. Each of these parts has its own particular powers of apprehension ; yet that which apprehends is, in both cases, the same, viz. the spiritual part. The spirit apprehends at some times spiritual matters and at other

times corporeal ; but whereas it apprehends spiritual matters by its own essence, without using any medium, it apprehends corporeal objects only through the instrument of the body, such as the brain and the sense organs.

And apprehension brings joy to the agent. Consider, for example, a child when he first experiences his bodily sensations : he is full of joy because of the light he sees and the sounds he hears. There is no doubt, then, that the joy provoked by the immediate apprehensions which the soul experiences of its very nature and without any external help are stronger and more pleasant. The spiritual soul, when it experiences such apprehensions, feels an indescribable joy and pleasure. And such apprehensions are not to be experienced through science or theory, but only by the removal of the veil of sensation and the utter forgetting of bodily apprehensions. Mystics often try to gain this experience for the soul, in order to ¹ secure this joy ; hence they seek, by asceticism, to kill the powers and apprehensions of their bodies, even thought in the brain, in order to leave the soul with its own apprehensions. And when the bodily interruptions and impediments have disappeared they experience a joy and pleasure which cannot be described. . . .

But as for their [i.e. philosophers'] ² statement that rational evidence and proofs can lead to this kind of apprehension and joy, it is quite false, as we have shown. For evidence and proofs are part of bodily apprehensions, for they proceed from such operations of the brain as imagination, reflection, and memory. Now the first object in striving for this kind of [mystical] apprehension is the killing of all these powers of the brain, for they are all opposed to it. And you may often see

¹ Reading "lihusul" for "bihusul".

² The chapter from which this excerpt is taken is entitled "*Of the Errors of Philosophy and Philosophers*".

the clever ones among them [i.e. the philosophically minded] poring over such books as *Al Shifa* or *Al Isharat* or *Al Naja*¹ or Ibn Rushd's *Digest of the Organon of Aristotle*, or others, fingering their pages and struggling with the proofs contained in them, and hoping to find that kind of [mystical] felicity in them—not knowing that by so doing they are merely increasing the impediments in their way.

They base themselves in this question on a text which they have copied from Aristotle or from Al Farabi and Ibn Sina, viz. that a person who has apprehended active reason and has been in contact with it during his lifetime has secured his portion of felicity. And by active reason they understand the first stage at which the veil of the senses is withdrawn, revealing spiritual things; hence they declare scientific apprehension to be a contact with active reason, [a contention] which has been shown to be false. For what Aristotle and his followers really mean by this apprehension and contact is that immediate apprehension which is given to the soul, without any instrumentality; and this can take place only by tearing the veil of the senses.

Equally false is their statement that the joy resulting from this apprehension is precisely the joy which we have been promised, for we have seen, from what they have shown, that behind the senses there is another form of apprehension, given to the soul without mediation, and that the soul rejoices greatly in this form of apprehension. But this does not mean that this joy is the same as the felicity enjoyed in the after life, although it is undoubtedly one of the pleasant ingredients which make up that joy.

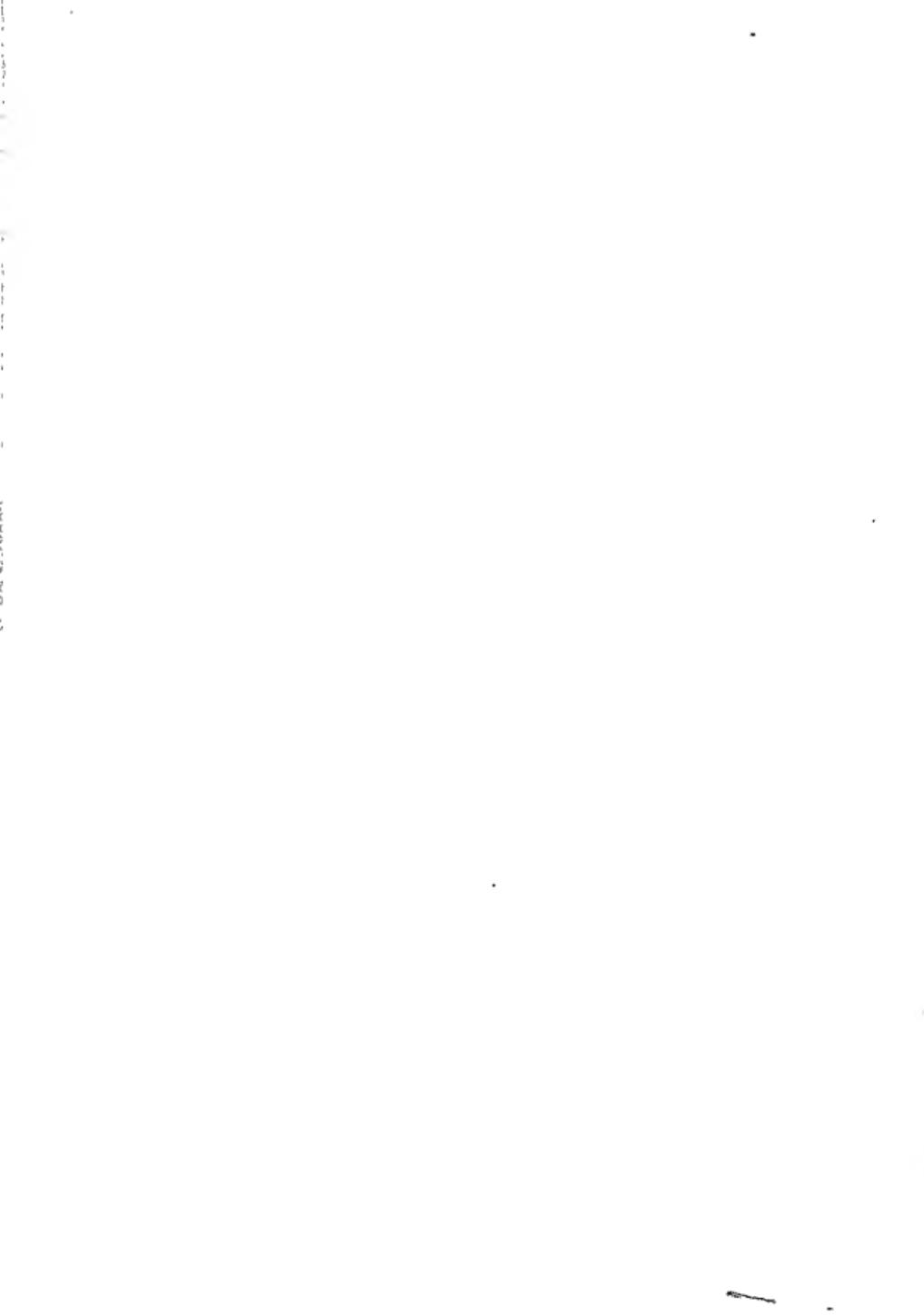
As for their statement that this felicity consists in apprehending

¹ The three philosophical treatises mentioned were written by Ibn Sina; the first of these is an encyclopedic comprehensive volume, the other two are smaller works.

these beings as they really are, this too is a false statement. For it is based, as we have shown before, on the erroneous and fantastic belief that every percipient wholly apprehends reality through his faculties. We have shown the error of this view, for the world of being, whether material or spiritual, is too wide to be wholly and exhaustively apprehended.

The final conclusion to be drawn from what is acceptable in their views is that the spiritual part of man, when it separates itself from the bodily powers, apprehends by its own powers a *certain kind of* object, viz. the objects of our knowledge, and not *all* objects, which are unlimited. This kind of apprehension gives the soul a joy comparable to that felt by a boy when he first begins to experience bodily sensations. And it is not for us to apprehend all beings or to enjoy the felicity promised to us by the Lawgiver unless we strive for it. . . .

[Vol. III, p. 216]



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